

A thrilling, brand-new, all-original Indy adventure!

# INDIANA JONES™ and the ARMY OF THE DEAD

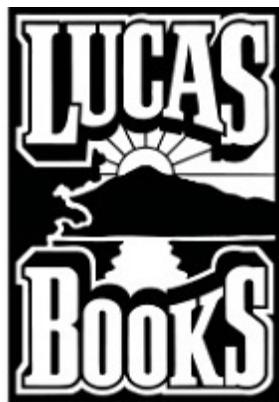


STEVE PERRY  
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

## **INDY'S IN DEEP— AND ON THE RUN FROM THE WALKING DEAD.**

There's no rest for the weary treasure hunter, but that's how Indiana Jones likes it. Fresh from spying for the Allies in the thick of World War II Germany, the globe-trotting archaeologist doesn't need much persuading to join his cohort "Mac" McHale in searching for one of the most coveted of artifacts: the fabled black pearl known as the Heart of Darkness. But the partners in adventure are not alone on their foray into the mysterious jungles of Haiti. German and Japanese agents are in hot pursuit, determined to possess the ebony artifact—and its secrets—for their own sinister purposes. And shadowing them all is an infamous voodoo priest, with powers of both diabolical science and black magic at his command.

On a treacherous odyssey across the Island of the Dead, where the legend of the *zombi* looms large, spiders, snakes, and booby traps will prove the least of Indy's challenges. And capturing the prize will be child's play compared to confronting an enemy unlike any other, whose numbers are legion and nearly impossible to kill—because they're already dead . . .



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*and the*  
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**STEVE PERRY**



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*Indiana Jones and the Army of the Dead* is a work of fiction. Names, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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For Dianne, naturally;  
and in fond memory of the  
Saturday morning matinees with serials  
at the Paramount Theater in Baton Rouge,  
in the halcyon summer of 1957

Not only is the universe stranger than we imagine, is stranger than we *can* imagine.

—SIR ARTHUR EDDINGTON

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Masters of the silver screen George Lucas and Steven Spielberg hardly need my thanks, but they have them. Always fun to get to play in their yards, they have such cool toys.

My resident *zombi* authority is Bobbe Edmonds.

A special acknowledgment to Harrison Ford, my generation’s Cary Grant, and an actor who is underappreciated for his expertise. Because it is fast or funny does not mean it is easy, and nobody does it better than Ford. Did you see those stunts in *The Crystal Skull*? Here is a man, who when asked about his movie success during an interview, once said, “Oh, it’s the writers . . .” Find me one of those who doesn’t love an actor who says that. Give him an Academy Award—he’s earned it. (And my apologies to him for the first line of the novel, even though it is a joke.)

Readers familiar with the Caribbean islands will notice I have taken some liberties with local geography. I made up all the events and the people I put there. Have fun—it’s just another of Indy’s adventures . . .

**INDIANA JONES™**

*and the*

**ARMY OF  
THE DEAD**

# ONE

*In the Air over the Windward Passage,  
Eight Miles West of Haiti  
Summer 1943*

INDY HATED small airplanes.

Yes, yes, planes were necessary evils, he knew. If there was going to be a race to collect an ancient treasure in the modern world of 1943, the winner wasn't going to be the guy who sailed 'round the Horn on a clipper ship to find it. Flying was a sharp knife in any field archaeologist's tool chest—but because planes were *necessary* didn't mean he had to like the blasted things. Or trust them. Oh, sure, mostly they flew just fine. Sometimes they didn't. After the third or fourth time one came down hard enough to blow out the tires or break the undercarriage, he was less trusting. Yeah, you did what you had to do to get where you needed to get. Someday your number was going to be up no matter what you did. No point in worrying about it too much, but . . . flying around like a bird?

Because of his OSS training, Indy knew more about aircraft than he wanted to know, and this one—a Taylor/Piper J-2 that looked a lot older than it could possibly be—seemed to be held together with baling wire and prayer. It was noisy, underpowered—a forty-horsepower engine was stock, it weighed a little over 500 pounds empty, and with Mac, who had to go 210, and Indy at about 190? That was the maximum cargo capacity right there. Raul, the little Cuban pilot, was small, but even he had to go 140, and that didn't count the weight of the fuel and what luggage they had, and all that meant this plane ought not to be able to get off the ground. Yet here they were, cruising two thousand feet above the Caribbean, at all of sixty miles an hour. Yeah, Raul said he had rebuilt the engine and perked it up a fair bit, but even so, that it had taken off three times with them so far? That was still amazing—

They say that bad thoughts draw the devil's attention.

The engine sputtered, was silent for what seemed like a thousand years but was probably only a second, and Indy's belly roiled as if it contained a most unhappy lizard trying to get out. The imaginary creature wasn't too choosy about its exit route, trying to go up and down at the same time . . .

Indiana Jones said a word that would have gotten his mouth

washed out with soap in polite family circles.

Mac laughed.

The pilot said something in rapid Cuban Spanish, and he laughed, too.

“He said—” Mac began.

“I heard him,” Indy said. “I’m sitting right *here*, third guy in a two-seater, and since I know there is no aerodynamic way this thing can stay up, he *better* have an in with the Virgin Mary.”

“You worry too much.”

“And you don’t worry enough.”

Mac—George McHale—was British to the core, and MI6. He and Indy had been paired on a dozen secret assignments for either His Majesty’s government or Uncle Sam, mostly in Europe, a couple in the Pacific, and while Mac was a good man to have covering your back, he was also prone to recklessness. Indy had saved Mac’s bacon more often than the other way around, though he did have Mac to thank for keeping him alive a few times—and his recent increase in rank. That latter was a mixed blessing. Indy hadn’t even wanted to be in *one* army, much less *two* of them, and he had just gotten used to being “Major Jones” in one of them, and now he was a light colonel.

Well. In an odd, technical sort of way he was a colonel . . .

The engine coughed again.

This time, Indy managed to keep from cursing.

In Spanish, Raul said, “Not far now, señors, only a couple of miles to the coast there.”

Indy had to lean to his right to see through the windshield, and the act of doing so caused the little plane to bank.

He didn’t say anything, but Raul must have noticed how quickly he leaned back the other way.

Raul—or maybe it was Indy—straightened the plane out. “Rosita is very sensitive, señor.”

Sensitive? A plane that you could turn by *leaning*? Indy shook his head. At least they had made it this far. They had taken off from Santiago, Cuba, flying to Guantanamo, then to a landing strip hacked out of a sugarcane field outside Baraco. They had refueled and then started over the Windward Passage, the strait that connected the Atlantic and the Caribbean, heading toward Mole Saint-Nicolas in Haiti. There was supposedly a runway and a fuel tank there at which they could gas up for the hop into Saint-Marc, and yet another fuel stop, before the final leg to Port-au-Prince. Maybe somebody would

want to see a passport or visa, but Raul didn't think it likely. The war and all, who had time to stand around waiting because a plane *might* land?

The J-2 had a range of only a couple of hundred miles, but it was what Mac had found. The "war and all" had sucked up a lot of available aircraft, along, apparently, with border patrolmen.

Indy looked at Mac. "I don't know why I let you talk me into this. We need the rest. It's why they gave us the furlough."

Mac smiled. "Because, Jonesy, you are a dedicated archaeologist, right? How could you pass up a chance like this? What if the Nazis or the Japanese got there first? Then that bloody giant black pearl would be buying jackboots for Adolf or maybe a sub for the emperor."

Indy didn't want to say it but couldn't stop himself: "Haiti is tropical. Crawling with snakes."

"Actually, old chum, they aren't any of them poisonous in these parts, you know."

"Well, yippee for that. It's not the poison, Mac, it's the . . . snakiness."

Mac laughed again.

"You wouldn't think it so funny if it was rats," Indy allowed.

Mac's smile disappeared. "Bloody Germans!"

*Gotcha*, Indy thought. Mac was like Indy's father—he hated rodents. He felt pretty good about that comeback. That thing with the rats in the Nazi castle—

The plane's little engine went *sput-sput-sput!* and died.

It got very quiet.

The engine didn't come back on.

The plane started to drop.

Raul began praying to the Virgin Mary.

Laden as the craft was, the glide pattern suddenly seemed more like that of a brick than a plane.

Indy tightened the tie holding his whip onto his belt, made sure his Webley's holster was snapped shut. "Where's my hat?" he said, looking around—

The sea, which had been a comfortable two thousand feet below, rushed toward them. It was only a hundred yards or so away now and coming up fast. They were, if they were lucky, going to ditch. If not, they'd go straight in and blow apart on impact.

"If I die and you don't, I'm coming back to haunt you, Mac."

He braced himself.

The plane hit the water—

The jolt clacked Indy's teeth together as his body snapped forward against the seat belt. The plane skipped once, like a rubber ball bouncing off concrete. The right wing tore loose, the pilot's door ripped away, and Indy saw the windshield shatter as Raul's belt broke and his head went through the glass.

They bounced and jostled over the water like a skipped stone, hard enough to break up more of the plane—

Finally, they stopped moving foward. The water rushed in, filling the little craft, which began to sink.

“Out!” Indy yelled.

Mac was already moving.

## TWO

THE TROPICAL SEAS under the bright sunshine were clear enough that Indy could easily see the shark as it cruised lazily past them. Fourteen, fifteen feet long, at least, and doubtlessly wondering if they were worth the trouble it would take to eat them.

*Go away. We taste bad. Really. Worst thing you ever ate.*

“Blacktip, you think?” Mac said. “I didn’t know they got that big.”

They were only a couple of hundred yards away from shore.

“Classify it later—swim!”

Indy put his face into the water in an American crawl. You couldn’t see as well as when doing the Australian stroke, but it was faster, and speed was preferable at the moment. Fortunately, he was a strong swimmer, having spent far too much time in ponds, lakes, ditches, rivers, and oceans around the world.

Mac, whose style was more unorthodox, made more noise and bigger waves, but he wasn’t far behind.

It seemed as if it took forever, but eventually Indy achieved shallower water, enough so he could stand on the sandy bottom with the waves lapping just under his chest.

Whew. The shark was too big to risk water this shallow. He wouldn’t follow them.

Mac was right behind him.

And right behind Mac? There was a big fin—

Mac must have seen it in Indy’s eyes. He turned, said, “Bloody hell!” and started a high-knee run toward the shore.

Indy was already moving, but Mac blew past him, churning the water into white foam. He wouldn’t have thought the man could run that fast on land, much less in the ocean . . .

They stumbled onto the gray sand beach and fell prone.

Once he recovered his breath, Mac said, “They aren’t supposed to do that, go into water that shallow.”

“Send him a telegram explaining it to him,” Indy managed.

After a moment, Mac said, “Pity I don’t have a dry cigarette. All this exercise is terrible for my lungs. The smoke would calm them.”

Indy said nothing. Everybody knew cigarettes cut your wind. As much running as he seemed to do, he sure didn’t need that.

After a moment, Mac said, “Too bad about Raul.”

“Yeah, well, if he had taken better care of Rosita, we’d still be in the air.” It was a poor joke, but—what were you going to do? Raul was probably feeding that shark’s cousins by now, and bits and pieces of the shattered plane would likely be washing ashore for weeks. Done was done. The Cuban must have known how dangerous flying that overloaded aircraft was. It was part of the risk he took. Some you won, some you lost . . .

“Hello? Have a look.” Mac pointed.

At first, Indy wasn’t sure what he was seeing, but then he was.

“My hat!”

He managed to get to his feet, and to the hat. He picked it up, shook the sand off it, and put it on. He suddenly felt better. Things could be worse. Yeah, they had crashed into the sea, but they were alive, he had his whip, his revolver, and his *hat*. That was a good sign. Nothing was broken. The day was definitely looking up.

Mac said, “I’ve been meaning to ask you—how have you managed to keep that blasted hat in one piece? You’ve had it as long as I’ve known you.”

Indy grinned. “I’ve had it a lot longer than that.”

Mac raised an eyebrow.

“I was . . . thirteen? Almost fourteen. It involved the Cross of Coronado.”

“I’ve heard of that. Gold, precious stones, supposedly had a sliver of Christ’s cross tucked away in it?”

Indy nodded. “Yeah. If every sliver of wood that’s supposed to have come from that cross got piled up together, it would be bigger than a giant sequoia. Anyway, I swiped the artifact from some tomb raiders, but Fedora outfoxed me.”

“Fedora?”

“I never knew his name. This hat was his. I think he took a shine to me after we went ’round. He gave me some good advice, and this hat, as a consolation prize.”

“What was the advice?”

“Essentially, you can’t win ’em all. Sometimes you have to wait for another day. He was right. Eventually, I did collect Coronado’s Cross and got it to the university’s museum.”

“And you still have the hat.”

“Yeah, I get it blocked and dry-cleaned when I’m back in civilization, use a hat jack when it’s in the closet. Had the sweatband replaced eight or nine times. And there are hatmakers who can repair

a tear or hole in felt, though it costs an arm and a leg. For what I've spent on this fedora over the years, I could have bought my own haberdashery."

Mac shook his head.

"Hey, everybody has to be someplace," Indy said. "And when I'm there, I want my lucky hat."

"Lucky?"

"I'm still breathing, aren't I?"

Mac grinned.

"What say we go and find some locals and see where we are?" Indy said.

Where they were, it turned out, was not far from a dirt road whereupon a large and ancient flatbed truck was passing. Indy waved it down.

The driver, a dark-skinned native, had a cabful of passengers—three adults, two children, a dog, and a small pig, maybe a couple of chickens, which Indy heard but didn't see. The cab was missing the windshield, side windows, and most of the roof, over which a dirty sheet had been draped to provide shade.

"*Bonjour,*" the driver said.

Indy could get by in various dialects of French, from Paris to New Orleans, and he asked if they could get a ride. The driver agreed. They'd have to sit on the back, which was piled high with bales of long, sword-shaped green plant stalks, but it would be better than walking. The driver was heading south to Saint-Marc, he said, a few hours away. That was the direction Indy and Mac needed anyhow.

"*Merci beaucoup, mon ami.*"

The back of the truck had a fresh, peppery smell from the cut plants.

"What's this lot, then?" Mac asked. He waved at the plants.

"Sisal. They use it to make rope. Not generally as good as the best hemp, but since many of the countries where that grows are still in Japanese or German hands, there's a demand for it. It's named for the Yucatan port where most of it used to be shipped from, though they don't actually grow it there. In the New World, it's believed to have originated in Chiapas, in southern Mexico. They raise it in tropical countries around the globe—South America, Asia, and the best grades come from Africa. Historically speaking, the crops are about—"

Mac cut him off: "Thank you, Professor Jones, for that *fascinating* lecture. Will there be an examination on Monday?"

"Hey, you asked."

"No, I asked what the plant was, not for its bloody life story!"

"That's your trouble, Mac—you have no depth. You need to expand your education beyond grave robbing. Learn some sociology, biology, anthropology. A little history would be good."

Both of them smiled.

Indy stretched out, exhausted. He pulled his hat down over his face. It was warm, and the rutted road and bouncing ride were less than ideal, but it took only a few minutes for him to drift off to sleep. He had been looking forward to getting back to the States and taking it easy for a while, after all the long days and nights island-hopping in the Pacific and then the weeks behind the lines in Germany, but sometimes you just had to go where the trail led . . .

## **THREE**

*Port-au-Prince, Haiti*

**C**OLONEL DOKTOR EDWIN GRUBER sat at a rattan table outside a ratty little café off the Ruta de Delmas, half a mile from the sea, drinking bad schnapps. The afternoon was warm, the breeze had died, and the shade of the half-rotten canvas umbrella jutting up from the table was little help against the heat. His ice-cream linen suit was damp with sweat and humidity. A few miles offshore, a rain shower seemed to be forming. If it came this way, the umbrella wouldn't stop much of the rain, either.

He hated the tropics.

That they had any schnapps, even low quality, was amazing. They called it *eau-de-vie* here, using the French name, but it was the same thing. Mostly, they drank rum, which was hardly a fit beverage for an educated European. Paint remover.

Indeed, he detested this island in particular even more than the tropics in general. Still, one did one's duty; and in this case, Gruber, formerly of the Waffen-SS Medical Corps, one of the first officers to wear the serpent on his patch, as well as a founding member of Röntgensturmbann SS-HA, the beloved Hauptamt X-Ray Battalion, was certainly one to do his duty, wherever it led him.

It had, alas, led him a long, long way from good schnapps and Berlin . . .

But Gruber had been sent by the Führer Himself, and if Herr Adolf deemed it necessary, Gruber would march through Hell without question—which was good, since this spot surely wasn't so far removed from that region. Gruber was perhaps not as good a Nazi as some, though he agreed with most of the party's goals—there needed to be a German Reich ruling the world, and keeping the race pure was necessary. So many mongrels—all you had to do was look around, wherever you happened to be. First, they would clean up the Fatherland, then the rest of the world . . .

Of course, after the war was over and the Third Reich ran things, a man who had the Führer's favor? Well, such a man would do very well indeed. At least he wasn't off at the Russian front patching up wounded. If there still was a Russian front . . .

He looked up to see Henri approaching, a fat glass tumbler of

amber-colored rum in hand. Henri was a local, and his loyalty was not to the Reich but to money; since Gruber had enough of that to spread around, Henri's loyalty was his, at least as long as he continued to pay him well. The rum he could smell from ten feet away. The vile stuff was strong enough to etch the plate on a battleship.

"Henri."

"Monsieur."

They spoke French, since that was the local language. Haiti was aligned with the Allies and not the Axis, and Gruber's cover was that he was a Dutch businessman here to facilitate export of sisal and assorted spices. Few, if any, of the savages on this island could tell the difference between a Dutch and German accent, and he spoke perfect if somewhat idiomatic Dutch, since his grandfather had often used that tongue at home, having taken a Flemish wife.

"What do you have for me today?"

"Two men, English or Americans, arrived in the city by the bus from Saint-Marc this afternoon."

Ah. More spies, perhaps. "Do they have names?"

"The bus driver allows them to be 'Jones' and 'Mac.' "

Gruber smiled. Obviously fake, those names. "And why do they concern me?"

"Word on the street is that they are looking for a guide to take them to Zile Muri-yo."

That got his attention fully. Somebody else heading for the Island of the Dead? A coincidence? Unlikely. This needed more exploration. The formula Gruber sought was there, somewhere, and he did not believe these two just *happened* to be looking for something else on the same island . . .

"Monitor them. Find out who they talk to, what they want."

"Oui." Henri paused to sip at his drink. "There is one other thing, monsieur. These men have come to the attention of other people. Including the—ah—Chinese scholar."

Gruber frowned, swallowing the curse he wanted to utter. It would be in German, and somebody might recognize that.

The man in question was no more Chinese than Henri here, though it was true that they did all look alike, the little Orientals. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, as matching as peas in a pod. This "scholar" was Dr. Yamada Hajime, a scientist like himself, respectable enough, but Japanese and working for the emperor. Nominally, they were on the same side, but in this instance Gruber was certain the Nipponese had come here seeking the same thing as he, and he did not intend to share it, once it was found. Of course, finding it was problematic in

itself, but one step at a time . . .

This was not particularly good news, but he couldn't let Henri know how important it was. Knowledge was power, and a smart man never gave power away. He affected a lack of interest. "Well. No matter, the Chinese. But keep me apprised."

"*Oui.*" Henri upended his tumbler and drained the last of the rum. About 160-proof, Gruber had determined. Light a match to it, it would burn with a pure, blue flame . . .

Jones and Mac, whoever they were, would bear more scrutiny. And not just from Henri. Gruber had other agents, and he tried to keep one set from knowing what the others were about.

Trusting anyone outside oneself was dangerous.

In his library at a large rented villa south of the main part of the city, just off the Dessalines and close to the bay, Yamada Hajime sat in a wicker chair. The breeze had picked up, and the wicker allowed it to reach more of him. He nodded at the man, who had several names. As "Louis," he worked for Yamada; when he reported to the German doctor Gruber, he called himself "Henri."

They spoke in French, one of nine languages in which Yamada was comfortable. He had already picked up a few phrases of Creole, a useful local dialect. "So, you think that the Dutchman considers these men to be of importance?"

"He did not say it as such, no, monsieur," Louis said. "But my feeling was, yes. He asked me to find out more about them. I saw his eyes glitter when I mentioned their intended destination."

"Then you must do as he asks. But before you report to him, I would appreciate it if you report to me first."

"But of course, monsieur." He smiled.

"You are a man of great skill and honor, Louis, and I much appreciate your diligent service." *Which I expect will last only as long as I pay more than the German. For you would, I believe, sell your grandmother for the right price.*

"Perhaps you would consider accepting another bottle of the special rum before you leave?"

Louis Henri Whoever-else-he-was grinned. "Ah, *oui!*"

Yes, he paid more, but the small gifts also mattered. The German did not offer such, and a few gourdes' worth of cane liquor, which meant nothing to Yamada, indicated that he valued Louis. All men wished to feel valued. Small respects could make a difference. Men, even dishonorable ones, wanted to be appreciated.

After Louis was gone, clutching his fresh bottle of dark rum, Yamada looked at the clock. He was supposed to send a radio transmission at ten past six o'clock local time. It would take most of an hour to get to where he had hidden the radio transceiver this week—he had to move it after each use, and that was not easy: The device was heavy, and the batteries even heavier. Well. He had plenty of time. A Japanese B-1 submarine was close enough to the island to receive the transmission, but it wouldn't stay near the surface long. The aerial would go up at exactly six ten P.M., and if no transmission was forthcoming within two minutes exactly, down it would go again. There were not many enemy warships about, but there were spotter craft. An imperial sub here was a long way from home.

Yamada knew something of naval vessels—he had an uncle who was a vice admiral in the imperial navy. Just last year, one of the long-range B-1s, the I-25, had deployed its Yokosuka E14Y seaplane off the northwest coast of the United States, where it had dropped a firebomb that started a forest fire on the mainland that would have done much damage . . . well, had it not started to rain.

No one could blame the imperial navy for the rain. Not yet.

One of the reasons this mission was so critical was due to the unfortunate decision to involve the United States in this war. There were so many of them, and they had so many resources. It had not been Yamada's choice, of course, but he had deemed it unwise to kick the sleeping giant. Some considered all Americans overfed and lazy, but Yamada had been to the country, and seen what they had accomplished there. They knew how to work with their hands as well as their minds, and the imperial army and navy were beginning to see what those overfed and lazy Americans could do once they turned their full attention to war. With much of the American fleet destroyed at Pearl Harbor less than two years earlier, they had built new ships in record time, and the battles at the Coral Sea and Midway had been disasters for the imperial navy. U.S. Marines had landed on many of the Pacific islands, and the Japanese army there was being pushed back into the sea or roasted alive in caves.

The Americans were barreling over the Germans in Africa and Europe, as well.

Too many enemies on too many fronts was a bad way to fight a war. Involving America had been a tactical error. Left alone, she might have stayed out of it, for at least a year or two more, and that would have given the empire enough time . . .

Except that the military *had* attacked Pearl Harbor, and time was running out . . .

His mission must succeed. The war itself might hinge on it.

To the navy, *Yamada* was but a code name, and their role was simply to pass messages back and forth. To them, he was a colonel. In truth, he worked for an organization known only as *Himitsu*, a spy group so secret that almost nobody in the military even knew it existed. And his goal here was critical. The Germans—albeit that they were allies in this war—could not be allowed to collect what Yamada had been sent here to find and obtain for the empire. If he failed, it was unlikely he would even be allowed to commit seppuku, so great would the shame be. To the grandson of one of the last samurai to carry two swords in the service of the shogun, an honorable death was much preferable to dishonor. Always.

But such worrisome thoughts were not necessary now. He had been on this island for only a short time, a few weeks, disguised as a Chinese scholar. It was amusing—the locals could not tell the differences among those from the Orient, and since he spoke Mandarin, Wu, and even a bit of Cantonese, how would they know? If a man has epicanthal folds and he speaks Chinese? Well, then, he must *be* Chinese . . .

He had gathered much information during his stay. The prize was not far off, and he would reach it before Gruber, a barbarian if a decent enough scientist. Honor demanded it.

## **FOUR**

“UH-OH,” INDY SAID.

“What?”

Indy inclined his head slightly. “Move! We need to get behind that bush. Slow and easy.”

Mac complied, then asked, “Something?”

“There’s a guy over there, next to the shoeshine stand, front of the hotel. Tall, reddish hair, Panama hat.”

“I saw him.”

“I know him. That’s Joe Edmonds. He was army intelligence, moved over to the OSS—or he had when I met him in DC a few months after Pearl.”

“So, a colleague. What’s the problem?”

“I’m supposed to be going home for a six-week furlough, remember? Not running around Haiti looking for an ancient black pearl. The boys upstairs might not like it if they found out.”

“Bosh. You worry too much.”

“Plus, we don’t need to be getting tangled up in whatever he’s doing here. If he’s working in the field, his superiors might decide that he needs help. Mine. And yours.”

Mac frowned at that. “Oh, that won’t do, that would put a crimp in our plans. Perhaps it is best if we avoid your former colleague.”

“What did I just say?”

As they made their way elsewhere from the shoeshine stand, a small boy, shirtless and barefoot, maybe ten, came running up. “Monsieur Mac.”

Mac looked at the boy.

“Follow me, *s'il vous plaît*.”

Indy gave Mac a raised eyebrow. “Your agents are getting a little young, aren’t they?”

“Good help is ageless.” To the boy he said in French, “Lead on, young sir.”

Following the boy along a twisty path that led past market stalls, past tiled walls, and through a warren of back alleys, the pair moved farther from the bustle of the city and into a more residential area, with small houses jammed close together. Indy had a pretty well-

developed sense of direction, but if it weren't for the sun, he would have gotten totally lost.

They arrived at an unremarkable whitewashed house surrounded by a short picket fence. The boy stopped and pointed. "Mademoiselle Arnoux's."

"Good lad," Mac said. He fished a handful of coins from his pocket and handed them to the boy.

"*Merci!*" The boy ran off.

"Old girlfriend?"

"Not at all. Never met. But that toothless woman at the fruit market mentioned that Mademoiselle Arnoux was the person to see if we wanted to travel to the Isle de Mort. I asked her to send a boy to set it up."

"Island of the Dead? I was hoping to avoid that for a few years," Indy said with a grin.

"Your humor skills are deteriorating, old sod. You need to work on them. How is your Creole?"

"I can order breakfast, as long as it's steak and eggs. I can ask where the bathroom is. Beyond that . . ." He shrugged.

"The locals call the place Zile Muri-yo, which means pretty much the same thing as the French name. Since that's where we are going, we need a guide who knows the area. It's not even on the map. Thus, here we are."

The woman who answered their knock at the door was stunning.

She was tall, a few inches shorter than Indy, with black hair and dark eyes, and skin the color of heavily creamed coffee. Her face was handsome, with balanced features, and when she smiled, her teeth were even and white, save for one slightly crooked one that gave her expression character. Indy guessed she was in her early to midtwenties. She wore a white blouse with an off-the-shoulder cut, a long blue cotton skirt, and sandals. There was a small silver cross on a chain around her neck. She smelled like sandalwood.

Taken altogether, she was quite striking.

Indy was suddenly much aware that he was several days from a real bath, that he needed a shave, and that his clothes could stand washing.

And that he was old enough to be her father.

"Messieurs?"

"Good afternoon," Mac said. "I'm George McHale and this is Professor Indiana Jones. Do we have the honor of addressing Mademoiselle Arnoux?" Mac's French had a strong Belgian accent, no surprise given the amount of time he had spent there.

*“Oui, I am Marie Arnoux.”*

“Dr. Jones and I are archaeologists. We are seeking an antiquity that we believe is on Zile Muri-yo, and we understand that you are familiar with the island. We would like to engage your services as a guide.”

She smiled again, revealing that endearingly crooked tooth.

“Ah. Well, you must come inside,” she said.

The house was small but clean and neat, and somewhat cooler than the outside. The young woman led them to a wicker couch and bade them be seated.

Indy noticed a set of icons on the wall, but they were too small for him to make out the subjects of the tiny paintings. Catholic saints? There was also some kind of tribal mask he didn’t recognize on a narrow table next to the wall. He wanted to go and examine these more closely, but he held himself in check. Not everybody understood an archaeologist’s passion for snooping.

Arnoux left the room and returned shortly with a pitcher of liquid and three glasses on a copper tray. “Tea,” she said. “But I am afraid the ice has all melted this late in the day.”

Indy sipped at the tea, which tasted as if it had been sweetened with cane syrup. It was refreshing. They all smiled at one another. This was Mac’s show, so Indy leaned back to let him speak.

The woman beat Mac to it: “So, what could be on such a small island unknown to many but the locals to draw a British and an American archaeologist such a great distance?”

Indy frowned. Mac’s accent could have given her the Brit connection, but how did she know Indy was an American? He hadn’t said a word.

As if reading his mind, she said, “Indiana is an American state in the Midwest, so I am assuming that a man bearing that nickname would be from the United States, *non?*”

“You seem knowledgeable about U.S. geography.”

She smiled yet again, and it made Indy want to smile in return. “I spent four years at a women’s college in New York State in the late 1930s,” she said.

It took Indy a second to realize she had switched from French to English.

“Majored in history, with a minor in comparative religion,” she went on.

“Really?”

“I’m a Dodgers fan. I saw Waite Hoyt pitch his last game in ’38. The Merry Mortician. Go, Brooklyn.”

Now Indy did smile. Hoyt had worked as an assistant undertaker in the off-season, hence the nickname.

“So, speak of this artifact.”

Mac and Indy exchanged glances.

“Come, gentlemen, if I am to act as your guide, I will need to know the proper questions to ask the locals—unless you have a map that shows the location?”

“No, no map,” Mac allowed.

“So if this item is to be located, we will have to talk with somebody on the island who has some idea of where such a thing might be found. Sooner or later, I must have this information. Better now, I think.”

“Then you are willing to help us?” Mac asked.

“Yes. But we must trust each other.”

The two men exchanged another quick look.

Indy said, “During the height of the slave trade in the late 1700s, a Central African woman was taken in a raid. The exact location of this is less than clear, but it was probably in the equatorial regions—Ngoyo, Kakongo, Ndongo, or Matamba.

“This woman was somehow very dear to the ruler of one of the most important kingdoms, a fellow known as the Manikongo. Some accounts have her as the wife; others, a daughter; still others say she was his mother.

“This ruler sought to buy her back from the slavers, and offered what was a rare and extremely valuable ransom. The item was a large, asymmetrical black pearl, taken from a giant oyster species long extinct. The pearl was the size of a man’s fist and shaped somewhat like a human heart. Legend had it that it had been the centerpiece of some kind of magic practiced by a family of witch doctors on the west coast before it was taken during a tribal conflict. Supposedly imbued with a curse.”

“Aren’t they all,” Mac said under his breath.

She either didn’t hear him or affected that she didn’t. She nodded.  
“Go on.”

“The slavers agreed to the deal, but when the pearl was delivered, they killed the men who brought it and took the treasure. Kept the woman, too, so the story goes.

“They sailed to Hispaniola, but during a storm, the vessel—either Spanish or Portuguese, that part is also unclear—was caught and wrecked in a storm off the south coast of Haiti. A result of the curse, so it was said. Most of the crew and cargo drowned, but somehow the pearl—which, by the way, was known as the Heart of Darkness—was

saved by a man who managed to swim ashore to an unnamed island.”

Indy'd had another adventure with a black pearl a few years back—smaller gem, different continent, and Nazis involved, too, complete with a Chinese dragon, or a pretty good illusion of one, but . . .

“The Heart of Darkness?” Marie asked.

Indy said, “If it sounds familiar, that’s probably because there’s a Polish writer, Joseph Conrad—he was a boat captain on the Congo River who wrote a story—”

“Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski,” she said.

“Excuse me?”

“Conrad’s real name,” she said. “I did read while I was at college, and I do know a bit about history.” Butter wouldn’t have melted in her mouth, so cool was her smile.

Mac gave Indy an I-guess-she-told-you look.

Indy nodded, properly abashed. “Right. Sorry.” It would be a mistake to underestimate this woman. Smart and beautiful and educated, a powerful combination. He could hardly forget Elsa, and how he had felt about her—right up until he realized she was a Nazi on their trek to find the Grail. Elsa had been gorgeous, sexy, sharp as a tack, and man, what a bad girl and a wrong number *that liaison* had turned out to be. Though it had had its moments before it went sour, those few hours in Venice . . . But—then he’d found out about her and his *father*? Oh, that had been really bad . . .

Mac took over the lecture, interrupting Indy’s stroll down memory lane: “So, from the descriptions—and these are oral, and passed down among certain tribes in what is today the Belgian Congo and Nigeria—the Heart was put in a place of safety and warded with magic to somehow attenuate the curse. Supposedly, it has rested there for a hundred and sixty years, give or take.”

“And you want it. To sell?”

“No,” Indy said, “to put in a museum! To keep treasure hunters from getting it first and peddling it to some gloating rich man who will keep it in a safe in his bedroom, hidden away, to drool over alone. Such things should belong to the world.”

She turned her gaze to regard Indy. “Is this what you really believe, Dr. Jones?”

He realized he might have sounded a little over the top. “Yeah. And call me Indy.”

“Then you must call me Marie. I will help you find this Heart of Darkness, gentlemen. But I must warn you—the Island of Death is a strange and dangerous place, at least as much so as Conrad’s Congo. Your lives will be at risk.”

Indy thought, *Huh. She agreed to that pretty quickly.* He said, “There’s a surprise.” He paused. “We’ve managed to keep ourselves alive in some dangerous places. We’ll chance it.”

She nodded. “We will need to hire a boat, and once we arrive there will be more expenses. Have you funds?”

Indy started to tell her they were broke, but Mac interrupted. “We do.”

Indy looked at him. “We do?”

Mac patted his ample waist. “Money belt. A fair number of gold coins. Been saving them for a rainy day, but it’s only money—and who needs that?”

“I hope you have enough to get us a room with a bath and a couple of razors. Some washed clothes would be nice, too.”

“Not a problem, old man.”

“I know a woman with rooms to let,” Marie said. “They are clean, and she is honest. Best if you don’t check into one of the city’s hotels. Port-au-Prince is full of spies since the war began.”

“Yeah, we noticed one of those ourselves,” Indy said.

“Really? Which one?”

Indy looked at Mac. In for a dime, in for a dollar. “An American.”

“Joe Edmonds,” she said. “OSS, posing as a sisal buyer.”

“You seem well informed about spies, too,” Indy allowed.

She smiled. “It is my home. One pays attention.”

Yeah.

“Go and see Madam Josette, for the rooms. We can begin as soon as you are ready.”

“All we need are directions,” Indy said.

“You do not need those. Alain will show you.”

A young man suddenly seemed to appear from nowhere, to stand in the doorway. He looked enough like Marie to be a younger brother or maybe a cousin. She said something to him in a soft and liquid Creole, none of which Indy caught except his name: Alain.

Mac and Indy stood.

“Thank you,” Mac said to Marie.

She gave him a slow nod, and for a moment Indy thought he could see something in her eyes, some knowledge, a hint of amusement. But he was tired and dirty and he realized he was probably imagining it. It had been a long and exhausting few days . . .

As they headed away from Marie’s house, Mac said, in English and quietly enough so their guide couldn’t hear, “More to that woman than meets the eye.”

Indy nodded. "Yeah. Surprised you noticed."

"I have passed time with a woman or two."

Indy nodded again. Penelope. Indy still had a letter to her from Mac, to be delivered if Mac died. Well, he didn't have it with him. The letter was in a bank box in Washington, DC, which was good, because the ink would have gotten a little smeary during that swim if it had been in his back pocket.

Every so often, Mac gave him an updated version of the letter, telling Indy to burn the older one.

A pity he didn't have anybody like that. Not since Marion . . .

Marion Ravenwood. Had that been only six years ago that he'd left her at the altar? Yeah, 1937. Marion . . . and he couldn't count Elsa, who hadn't been at all what she had first seemed. And then there was that woman revolutionary in Peru, early in '41, and his decision to join in the war effort, and look where *that* had led . . .

*Don't go there, Jones. No point. It's all history now.* What was it Satchel Paige said? Avoid fried meats and don't look back: Might be something back there, and it might be gaining on you.

Onward and upward.

## FIVE

BOUKMAN STOOD in the warm darkness outside the rooming house, watching people as they passed in front of the windows. No electricity here, but they had kerosene lanterns aplenty, and the yellow lamp glows suffused the two-story wooden house, leaking out the glass and cracks into the night. Moths bounced from the windows, trying to get to the flame, unaware that the clear panes were all that kept them from turning into torches . . .

Boukman, a head taller than average, was effectively invisible even to the mosquitoes as he leaned against the rough bole of a palm tree, a phantom in the shadows. If a man looked right at him, he would not see him. Boukman could hide in plain sight, so great were his talents in the black arts.

He could have sent somebody. A man of his status? He did not have to skulk around in the blackness spying. But he did need to see them for himself, for they were something unlike anything he had ever felt before, even at his age.

He smiled at that last thought. As far as he knew, there were no other living men his age. It was possible that somewhere in the world there were magicks equal to his own, other ways to stave off the Final Harvest, to extend one's years far beyond the oldest normal men. He had heard rumors, but if there were such, he had not felt their energies vibrating through the realms on either side while he was *chwal espri*—the Horse of the Gods. And he was most sensitive to such things. He had felt the two white men—the *imen blan*—as soon as they had set foot on the land. Felt them as strongly as if they had touched him with their pale hands.

That meant something.

He'd had The Dream again last evening, the same recurring nightmare that had been with him since he'd been a boy. The Dream had small variations, and he had yet to determine the full meaning of it, even after all these years. But each time he had The Dream, events of great importance followed it, always. So these *imen blan* meant something. He did not yet know what—nor how he was to use them; only that he must. Boukman had a destiny, and it was part of some grand design, he knew that. He had not risen to be the most powerful man in the islands for no purpose, even if he did not know what it was.

That they had found their way to Marie Arnoux? But another sign they were *espésyal*. One could possibly be foolish enough to ignore a Sign, but no bokor, nor even an average houngan worth his own salt, would ignore *two Signs*, and there were other things of which he had become aware of late, interlinked pieces of a great puzzle that he was being given to solve. It would be a thing of much power, he felt, perhaps more than any Vodoun bokor ridden by the loa had ever possessed.

Who sent these men? Why? He would find out, eventually.

Such a thing was like a lighthouse beacon on a moonless, cloudy midnight. One had to go to it. Power called to power, and in this land bokor Boukman was supreme. The world was larger than his island, however, and if he was to bestride the seas and control more of it? He would need to increase his strength. The strongest man in a village was not necessarily the strongest man everywhere. He was at his limits now.

These two white men from afar? Somehow, they were the key.

He had seen them. Now he would have them watched. He could call upon many eyes, and he would. Something of great import was happening, and these men were the catalyst.

He turned and walked away from the house. The night was overcast and ebon, but there was nothing natural in the dark that frightened bokor Boukman.

Nothing that possibly could.

*The Pétionville Road,  
Four Miles South of Port-au-Prince*

Indy, Mac, Marie, and, as it turned out, her brother, Alain, rode in a rusty, mostly black Chevrolet of uncertain vintage, a rattletrap four-door sedan. Indy guessed it was about a 1930. With the war, they'd stopped making cars for commercial sale in the United States, churning out Blitz Buggies—"jeeps"—tanks, and planes in their place, so whatever you had, you had to keep running. Even so, this was an old beast, and grumpy.

After a good night's sleep and a bath, with their clothes washed and dried, not to mention a good breakfast, Indy had felt a lot better—though that feeling was beginning to fade already. They were bumping and jostling along a rutted dirt road heading south, more or less, climbing into the mountains, and Alain drove with a slapdash, carefree attitude that made Indy nervous more than a couple of times. The car smelled as if somebody had roasted a pig in it, long ago, so that only a faint hint of the odor remained. They bounced around on

the old cracked leather seats like Ping-Pong balls.

Now dressed for a trek, Marie wore khaki slacks, a long-sleeved khaki shirt rolled up past her elbows, and hiking boots. Fixed to her belt was a stubby sheath knife, with what looked like a bone handle. She had a small backpack in the car's trunk.

As his teeth clacked together for maybe the fifteenth time, Indy said, "How far did you say it was?"

"As the crow flies, only about thirty, thirty-five kilometers to Terre Rouge. But because of the hills and the way of the road, twice that and a little."

Indy nodded. Terre Rouge. That meant "red dirt."

"Two, three hours, longer if it rains."

"Bad road in the rain?"

"Bad road anytime. Worse in the rain. Easy to slip over the side." She made a diving gesture with one hand.

"And if we don't fall off the road or get beaten to death by the time we get there?"

"My cousin André is a fisherman, he has a boat. Zile Muri-yo is only four kilometers to the south of the coast at Terre Rouge. It is not large, the island, only five kilometers long by two at the widest. But it is heavily forested, mostly jungle, with a couple of sisal plantations hewed from the woods. A small village there."

"Shouldn't be hard to find what we're looking for on an island that size," Mac said.

"Maybe not so easy. There are many places where the trees and brush are so thick, you cannot see a meter into the forest," she said. "Much of it is accessible only on foot and by way of sharp machetes and strong arms. In such terrain, it can take all day to go three hundred meters. Even if you knew exactly where it was, getting there wouldn't be a picnic."

*Too much to ask that it would be easy,* Indy thought. Aloud, he said, "Three miles by a mile and a quarter, that's not an inconsiderable piece of real estate. I don't recall ever seeing this island on a map before."

"Perhaps no one who made maps saw it. Or perhaps it was not there when the maps were made."

He started to reply, but just then Alain hit a particularly deep rut and said "Damn!" Indy shut his mouth to keep from accidentally biting his tongue off. What did *that* mean? Wasn't *there*?

"Two or three hours of this, I'll need new kidneys," Mac said. "Bladder, too."

Indy nodded.

Marie chuckled. “*Mes amis*, this is the good part of the road. Wait until we go to the rough stretch.”

### *Port-au-Prince*

Yamada looked at the spy. “You have done well, my friend. Please, take the remainder of the case of rum as part of my thanks.”

Louis/Henri/Whoever grinned. “*Oui*, monsieur, I am most grateful.”

“I expect that we will do much more business in the future. I would take it as a personal favor if you would not pass this information along to the Dutchman.”

The man shrugged. “No reason he needs to know.”

“Thank you, my friend. I am in your debt.”

After he was gone, Yamada sent a boy to bring Captain Suzuki—ostensibly another Chinese scholar, but actually an agent of the imperial army and his own second in command. Suzuki had men standing by—more fake Chinese—and they would be ready to move at an instant’s notice. Men from good families, willing to do whatever was asked of them. And of course, the way of the samurai was found in death.

It was only a few minutes before Suzuki arrived in the rented car, a 1938 Packard 8, a powerful and well-built automobile. Yamada was fond of big American cars—the Japanese had nothing like them, and it was doubtful the *zaibatsu* like Nissan, Toyota, or the new Hino truck maker would ever produce vehicles of such quality. It didn’t seem to be in the Japanese nature to do that kind of mechanical work. A pity.

After the required polite greetings—manners and honor had to be observed, even here—Yamada came to the point.

“The two *gaijin*, along with a local woman and man, have headed south on the Pétionville Road.”

“Ah. As you surmised. The craft will be ready by the time we get to it, Yamada-san.”

“Excellent, Captain.”

They set off for the airport. Suzuki had a chartered plane standing by. They would have needed it eventually, and sooner was better than later. Likely their quarry were heading for Marigot or Dépôt, on the south coast, or perhaps Jacmel on the river. There were many villages with boats there, and it didn’t really matter which one. Yamada knew where they were going to wind up eventually; the stops in between? Not important to know.

There were no aircraft landing sites on the Island of Death, as he understood it, but there was a packed-dirt strip along the river at

Marigot near the southern Haitian coast that was long enough for a large plane to land. That was where he was going.

Yamada's plane would get them there, and a boat from there would put them on Zile Muri-yo long before the two men, whom his man Louis had determined were American and British archaeologists. This confirmed his suspicions. They had come looking for the same thing as he. Well, perhaps not precisely such, but the result would be the same. That they had come meant they either knew where it was or had some way to find it, and the Japanese had learned long ago that if you could follow a bee to its hive, it would save you much work in collecting honey . . .

When he and Suzuki arrived at the Port-au-Prince airport, the plane, a Boeing 247, was already warming up its twin engines. The craft was loaded, since Yamada had known he would be needing it sooner or later. Plenty of room for his men, since it could easily carry ten passengers, along with a three-man crew and several hundred pounds of supplies. The flight would take only a few minutes, and they would be well ahead of Jones and McHale and their local contact.

The sword had been drawn, the edge glistened in the hot sunlight, and now it was time to address the cutting . . .

Gruber said, "And what do you have for me, Henri?"

The little brown man appeared to consider the question as he sipped from his glass. "Nothing today, monsieur, I am afraid."

"Ah, well. So it goes. Listen, Henri, I have left my wallet in my car, behind the market there. Come with me and I shall pay you for this week."

"*Oui*, monsieur."

Henri finished his drink and stood.

The car, bought locally, was an old but well-maintained Ford, parked in the quiet alley behind the market. Nobody was around.

Gruber double-checked to make certain they were unobserved. He opened the passenger door, reached under the seat, and came out with an American .45 pistol. Of course, he preferred the Luger, which was a much better-made weapon, sleek, perfectly machined, and using the smaller and more elegant 9mm round. Even the Mauser HSc pocket pistol in 7.65mm issued to doctors was much better, but it would not do to be found here with a German sidearm. There was the tiny hideaway single-shot Swiss pistol in his pant pocket, but the Swiss were neutral . . .

Henri's senses were not so fogged by the rum that he didn't know what he saw.

“Monsieur? What is this?”

“It’s a Colt, I believe. Very nasty. A real manstopper.” He pointed the gun at Henri.

“But—why menace me this way?”

“Because I don’t care for liars. You saw the Chinese scholar today, only a few minutes ago. And yet you did not mention it.”

“But—but—there was no need! I had nothing to tell him!”

“I don’t believe you. I am certain you did have something to tell him. I’ve had men watching you, my friend. You are being devious. I will know why, or you will not be drinking any more rum, you understand?” He waved the gun. “If I think you are lying again, I will shoot you dead, right here and now.”

Henri didn’t go pale, but he certainly began to sweat. “It—it slipped my mind. Nothing of importance, monsieur, I swear!”

“Let me decide that.”

“The two men. Dr. Jones and McHale, they—”

“*Doctor Jones?*”

“They—they are, how do you say? *Archéologues?*”

Archaeologists? Damn! This was unexpected and bad news.

“And you told this to the Chinaman?”

“Y-y-yes.”

“What else?”

“Nothing! Only that they had engaged a local woman and that they had left town today, driving south in an automobile, through the mountains.”

“*Gott im Himmel!*”

“Monsieur?”

“All right, Henri, I believe you. I am going to let you live. Go on now, before I change my mind!”

Henri relaxed and turned away—

Gruber shot him in the back of the head.

The noise was quite loud, it made his ears ring, but could be mistaken for a truck backfiring, and pinpointing the location would be difficult if anybody bothered to wonder. Most of the locals here wouldn’t turn a head to look at an erupting volcano if it might interrupt them dozing, eating, or drinking. Yes, the heat and all, but still, they made sloths look energetic. Haiti-time, they said when they were late for a meeting. It meant they got there when they got there. Clocks and watches were wasted here.

Haiti-time. Uncivilized beyond measure.

Quickly he climbed into his car and started the engine. He had to get to the airport and rent a plane. It would not do that Yamada was ahead of him. He also had to send a coded wire. He would need help, and there was a group of dedicated German soldiers in the Dominican Republic standing by, waiting for his order. They could meet him in Marigot in a matter of a couple of hours, perhaps less.

Even so, he was behind, and he hated it. It would not do.

As for Henri? He simply could not have been left alive to tell tales. Gruber wasn't planning to return to this city or country ever again if he could help it, but, better that there weren't any loose ends. He doubted if anybody really cared about the death of a ne'er-do-well like the late Henri anyhow . . .

With any luck, in a week or two he would be on his way home, and in charge of a project that would give Germany the victory in this war. If he never saw a tropical country again, it would be fine by him.

## **SIX**

*Terre Rouge, Haiti*

**“W**E ARE GOING to cross a couple of bloody miles of the Caribbean in *that?*”

Marie looked at Mac. “Unless you would rather swim?”

“No, I won’t be swimming in these waters, thank you.”

Indy could see what Mac saw. The “*that*” in question was a boat, but it looked neither sturdy nor large enough to carry four people. Not much longer than the shark that had chased them ashore, the thing was open-topped, its wood lacking much in the way of paint or varnish. The outboard motor on the back looked like it would have been more at home on a sewing machine.

Indy shook his head. Yeah, it was bad, but he had been in worse.

“My cousin André has been fishing these waters for fifteen years in this *bateau*. It will get us there—unless a storm comes along.”

Indy grinned. Well. There was one more thing to worry about, wasn’t there? This was the Caribbean, after all. Wouldn’t that be fun? The sky was free of clouds at the moment, but the tropics were volatile when it came to the weather.

“It will only take a few minutes. You can see the island from here, look.”

Indy had already spotted the place, a green blob on the sea less than two miles out.

He looked at Mac.

“In for a penny, in for a pound.”

“I suppose.” To Marie, he said, “What about supplies? We can’t carry much in *that*.”

“There is a store on the island. We can get what we need there.”

Indy shrugged. “Fine. Let’s go.”

“In a bit. André and I must first offer a small sacrifice to assure our safe journey.”

“Sacrifice? Aren’t you a Catholic?”

“Among other things, yes. It is traditional when André takes the boat out to sea to ask for a blessing.”

“God has pretty good ears, I expect He can hear you as well from here.”

She smiled. “We have our ways, Indy. Surely a man of your experience understands?”

Indy sighed. “Yeah, I suppose. Go, do what you need. Mac and I’ll wait here, make sure the boat is shipshape.”

Marie and her cousin André approached Alain and spoke to him. Her brother waved at Indy and Mac and headed back for the Chevrolet.

“Lad seems to be in a bit of a hurry. Must have left the water running back home.”

“Might as well have a look at this tub,” Indy said. “We don’t want to see a snout sticking up through the bottom halfway there.”

Mac laughed. “That’s my line, isn’t it?”

As they headed toward the water’s edge, Indy caught a movement in the trees to the left of the fisherman’s house.

Mac caught the look. “Something?”

“I thought I saw somebody there, in the woods, watching us.”

Mac glanced that way. “I don’t see anyone.”

Indy shook his head. “Gone, now. All I got was a glimpse. A face. Not real healthy looking.”

“Maybe a trick of the light,” Mac said.

“Maybe.” But his impression was that it was somebody sneaking around, and there was something odd about them . . .

Well. He’d check it out, but they wouldn’t be here that long. Maybe on the way back.

### *Zile Muri-yo*

When Boukman spoke, it was with the voice of Baron LaCroix—called here Lakwa—of the Guédé, the Spirits of the Dead. To grant Boukman power, the Guédé demanded much of their horse—though the rider was inside rather than without, and they rode him hard. Often after such a ride, Boukman was too tired to move for hours, sore for days. Lakwa was not as fierce as Cimetière, the Guardian of the Cemeteries, and neither was as hard on him as Samadi’s wife, Maman Brigitte, who liked to drink hot pepper sauce and curse long and loud, burning his belly, roiling his bowels, and turning his voice into a hoarse whisper.

He shared his body with Lakwa now, and the voice coming from his lips was that of the loa:

“Kill the black rooster and bathe in the blood! The dark of the moon comes, and thus the Risen will flourish!”

There were half a dozen zombi servants gathered around Boukman in the small clearing. These were the True Risen, not the Children of the Potion, and their powers were much greater. No thirst, no hunger, they were bothered not by the heat of day nor the insects at night; their hearts did not beat, nor their souls yearn, for their souls were passed on, leaving them empty, existing only to serve the bokor who commanded them.

They took much power to raise and hold, the true ones. At his peak, too many years ago, he had been able to keep two score animated, and those able to travel the length and breadth of Hispaniola even while he himself slept. These days? Half that many were all he could manage, and when he was really tired some of them dropped and lay still. Age wanted to rob him of everything, and fighting it cost more and more power each year. Despite being weaker, the Children of the Potion were so much easier to make and control than the True Risen. Administering a drug was easier than bringing someone back from the dead . . .

There was a change blowing, he could feel the herald winds brushing against his lips, could taste the coming of it . . .

Abruptly the baron left him, and he felt himself sag as the loa's spirit flew away.

The Risen stood silently, waiting.

"Go," he said. "Watch. Learn. Come back and report."

The half a dozen dead—five men and one woman—shambled wordlessly toward the forest.

Boukman already knew the white men were on their way here. One of his servants had seen them by the sea on the mainland, and he knew they were coming. He did not know why yet, but that knowledge drew nearer. He would uncover it soon.

For now? He needed to rest. He was exhausted.

The hut on the edge of the clearing beckoned. It was rude—walls, a roof, a straw mattress on a new bamboo floor already half eaten by mites—but it would serve. It would keep off the rain when it fell, shade him from the sun. Nothing alive, no bug, no animal, no man would bother him as he slept and regained his strength. Later, one of the Children of the Potion would come with food, and to attend to his other needs. He was old, but having a young, pretty, and pleasingly plump woman come to bathe his face, rub his body with scented oils, and do anything else he might deem necessary—anything at all? That was part of his power, albeit only the smallest part.

There was an old saying on the islands: If your daughters are pretty or your sons handsome, best hide them away, lest Boukman claim them for his own . . .

He grinned. It was true—he liked them attractive. Many of the young and beautiful had died suddenly, for no apparent reason, and come back to serve as Boukman's slaves. That was the way of things when you were a bokor. You took what—and who—you wanted.

Later, after he was rested, he would be ready to deal with the white men and whatever it was they had been sent to bring him.

\* \* \*

In the dream, Boukman was running, and his steps were slow, as if his bare feet were sunk deep in a thick mire. As hard as he tried, he could only manage a pace akin to a slow walk.

Something was behind him, unseen, and it was coming for him.

Though he could not see it, he knew it was a monster beyond measure, a thing of such vile composition that to behold it would curdle your blood. To be touched by it would be infinitely worse, a horror beyond any a sane man could imagine. Gibbering madness for ten times ten million years.

In the dream, Boukman was seventeen again, a man, but not one of enough strength to stop the terror chasing him. His machete was made of rubber, his gun held only cotton bullets, and his powers were small. What use was a love potion against the thing that wanted his soul? How could he possibly survive?

Even though he knew it was a dream, he felt the fear.

And the answer, he knew, was that as he stood, he could not.

But: There was hope, a faint ray that shined down supernally from the heavens. There was a way. A way to become more than he was, and it was in front of him, just . . . there, ahead . . .

Like the monster behind him, what lay before was unseen, and he could not fathom what it was, only that it was his salvation. If he could get to it before the thing chasing him, if he could steep himself in whatever it was, he would have the power to stop it, to defeat it, and to become more than a man—more than any man had been or would ever be . . .

He pushed himself to move faster, his lungs laboring, his muscles aching, his heart pounding close to its bursting point—

—to no avail. He was a fly in hardening amber, wading through glue, and the evil behind him kept gaining. He felt it well over him, a malignant black wave about to crash down and engulf his soul—

Boukman awoke with a start, sitting up with a yell stillborn on his lips, sweat soaking the thin sheet upon which he lay.

The Dream. Come to warn him. Come to tell him there was something for him to find that would help, as it always did when he heeded it. Attention must be paid, and if it was done properly, it would reward him.

It had to be Marie and her white men—her *imèn blan*. Nothing else was new.

He would have to examine it as a boy did an ant under a magnifying glass. And he would have to take care that he did not focus the sun's light into a burning ray that would destroy the insect before he learned its secrets . . .

## **SEVEN**

MARIE HAD BEEN right about the place being a jungle. There was a strip of beach, a few palm trees, and then a wall of rain forest that looked like, well, a wall. Most of Haiti had been logged, Indy knew; the Spanish, the French, the natives, whoever, had cut down trees to build houses, ships, churches, even sidewalks. But this looked to be old growth, towering trees little bothered by axes or saws. Odd. You'd think somebody would be in there harvesting this valuable timber like gangbusters.

Marie spoke to her cousin, and this time Indy was pretty sure he caught a couple of the Creole words, one of which meant "home."

"He's leaving us here?" Indy asked.

It was an unnecessary question, since André had already walked his boat around and pointed it nose-out toward the mainland. As they watched, he waded it out, rode it over the first waves, which weren't much, and then hopped in and cranked the engine. He turned and waved good-bye.

The trip over had been fine. The water had been calm, the little two-cycle motor ran merrily along, putt-putting and burbling to itself, the burnt smell of gasoline-and-oil mix mostly blown away by a slight cross-breeze. That it was not the greatest boat in the world didn't lessen Indy's desire to have it stay close at hand.

"He will be back in a few days. There are other boats on the island if we need them. Come. The store is this way, only a kilometer or so, and slightly inland."

Indy didn't think that any kind of permanent structure would do well only "slightly inland," given the storms that raked this part of the Caribbean every year or two. He'd been in typhoons, and the hurricanes in this hemisphere were every bit as nasty as the typhoons in the Pacific. Winds at 130 or 140 miles an hour, tidal surge going halfway across the island? That would make living here risky, and the summer brought the storms . . .

Mac stood looking at the jungle.

"Something?"

"Well, I don't see anything but greenery, but it feels as if somebody just walked across my grave. Rather a creepy sensation."

Mac stuck his hand into his jacket pocket, and Indy knew he was checking to make certain his gun was still there. Indy carried an

English revolver, a Webley, a big, clunky, hard-hitting old piece. Mac had a thing for Italian weapons, and he favored a Beretta, a little .32 semi-automatic, the like of which he had been carrying since the early 1930s. He preferred the extra rounds, he said, eight in the magazine and one in the pipe, for a total of nine. Indy argued that the little 7.65mm round was anemic—you needed to shoot somebody two or three times to get the same effect as the Webley .455—but Mac was obstinate about such things.

A lot of folks had their talismans . . .

One of the first things they had done when they'd reached a town after the plane crashed was buy a little can of oil to deal with their guns' immersion in the sea. Salt water was bad for blued steel.

Mac's pistol was better than no gun, though, and a lot of guys had been killed with Berettas. Not for much longer, though. The Italians were on the run, and he'd be surprised if they stayed in the war until the end of the year.

"I don't see anything," Indy said.

Mac nodded. "Probably nothing to see. Getting spooked in my old age."

"Old? You aren't any older than I am."

"Look at that sweet young woman walking ahead of us, Indy. Compared with her, we are ancient."

"Speak for yourself, pal. I don't feel a day over thirty."

"And you don't *look* a day over sixty."

"Hey, forty-four—!"

Mac laughed. "Come along. We don't want to be huffing and puffing to keep up with her. I pray this store has some cigarettes. My nerves are entirely too jittery."

"I'd settle for a bottle of beer and a couple cans of beans."

Yamada was not a field agent, in the sense of tromping around in the woods and enjoying it, but he wanted to see these men for himself. Suzuki and his eight troops were equally at home in a jungle, in the desert, or upon an ice floe, so it didn't matter to them. Spread out here in the thick forest, denser than any Yamada had seen, even in Borneo, coated in mosquito repellent that kept them from sweating where it covered their pores, it felt like an oven, but with steam mixed into the heat. Through the set of Zeiss 6/30 binoculars, courtesy of their allies the Germans, Yamada got his first glimpse of the four who came ashore, right where their local contact had said they would. Something to do with a reef that made it the best place to land for half a mile in either direction, apparently.

A small, dark, pretty woman led them—that would be Arnoux. According to the description he had gotten, the heavier of the men was George McHale, the Englishman. The thinner one, Dr. Henry Jones, called himself Indiana. Yamada had radioed the sub and asked about them, and a coded message had been sent in return. There was not much information on the two since 1939. Jones worked for an American university, teaching and doing fieldwork recovering ancient artifacts. McHale seemed to have no permanent address or job, but several of his exploits involved working for the British Museum. Nothing on either man specifically for the last four years, though one notation claimed that they had been in certain of the occupied territories in the South Pacific, and there was some speculation they might be spies, of a sort. Documentation was spotty regarding this.

Nothing to spy on here, though, unless insects had joined the war.

No, they were here in their capacity as treasure hunters.

Once their quarry were well away from Yamada's position, he said to Suzuki, "We are done. Let us return to the campsite."

"Shall I have men follow them?"

"No need. They will be going to the village store."

"How can you be sure?"

"If they plan to tramp around in the interior searching for something, they will need supplies, and somebody to guide them. There is no place else to get such. Have a man watch the store, so that we know when they are outfitted and ready to go."

"*Hai*, Yamada-san."

The blade was drawn. The edge glittered in the tropical sun.

The first cut was already in motion . . .

"Eh?" said one of the men.

"What is it?"

"Your pardon, Yamada-san, I heard something behind us."

"A pig," Suzuki said.

"It did not sound like a pig, Captain-san."

"Really? Do you know what a pig sounds like?"

The man lowered his gaze to the thick humus that was the jungle's floor. "*Hai*. I was raised on a farm outside Hiroshima, Captain-san. We had a few swine."

"Well, then, go and see what it is and report back!"

"*Hai!*"

But when the soldier returned, there was nothing for him to report. Whatever it was had departed.

## *Port-au-Prince*

There was a war on, but you could hardly tell it in Haiti. A curious question to the man behind the desk at the *Flughafen*—the airport—was all it had taken:

“*Pardonnez-moi*, monsieur, I was wondering if my friend the Chinese scholar and his party have left yet?”

And without blinking: “Ah, *oui*, they left only half an hour ago.”

“For Jacmel?”

“*Non*, for Marigot.”

“Ah, yes, I forgot. Well, we’ll meet them there.”

But of course Gruber knew better than that. Another two planes bearing foreigners landing at the same dirt strip so soon? Too easily remembered. His crew, led by SS captain Schäfer, should have already been in the air by the time Gruber achieved this airport.

Gruber was an excellent pilot. Once he was aloft in his chartered plane, a Blériot Aéronautique two-seater about five years old, he sent a radio message on the agreed frequency, consisting of one word: “Jacmel.”

In French, the two-word reply: “*Je comprehends.*”

So, they were in accord.

The flight, only thirty-five or so kilometers in a straight line, needed some zigzagging to avoid the mountaintops. The craft was not pressurized, nor did the heater seem to work. At more than ten thousand feet, breathing the thin air was most uncomfortable. Fortunately, the French plane came equipped with a heavy leather jacket and gloves, so it was not an altogether miserable flight, and it was less than an hour from the time he took off until he landed.

In another hour, Schäfer and his men arrived in a more substantial and much faster twin-engine, all-metal Douglas DC-2.

Schäfer, dressed in planter’s clothes—a wide-brimmed white hat and colonial-white linen trousers and jacket—but still obviously a military man by his bearing, marched over to Gruber. For a horrible second, Gruber was afraid the captain would offer him a Sieg Heil extended-arm salute, but he only nodded.

In Dutch, he said, “*Mijnheer.*”

Gruber smiled. “Good to see you again, Hans. Shall we go?”

Jacmel was at least forty kilometers from the final destination by boat—but Yamada was perhaps wily enough to have left a guard with his airplane, and Gruber did not want the Japanese doctor to know he was going to have company on the Insel der Toten—the Island of the Dead. Forewarned was forearmed, and while Gruber had no doubt

that in a fight, his elite SS warriors would be more than a match for whatever the Japanese imperial army had dispatched, he would rather avoid such a thing. Best was to get there, find the two *Archäologen*, follow them, collect what they found, and depart. It was obvious they were after the same thing, and they seemed to know where they were going. Gruber had heard that the formula was supposedly somewhere on the island, but nothing further. That the American and Brit were here meant they thought so, as well, and that was some kind of a confirmation. They *must* be after the formula, and the clues regarding it? From what little he knew, the information about this couldn't have been too hard to uncover, else how would the Japanese have found it at almost the same time?

He was willing to sacrifice his troops if need be, but there were times when stealth was smarter than force. This might be one of those times.

So now, in the boat Kapitän Schäefer had procured, a stout fishing craft ten meters long with a good engine, manned by a local who knew a spot to put ashore where they would be unlikely to run into anybody else—they made best speed for the island, bearing all the supplies they would need to stay for two weeks, if necessary.

The sea was calm, the day bright and hot, and even though he was running somewhat late, Gruber had every hope that he could make up for lost time. He was, after all, a German. In such matters, his natural superiority would shine through. The Japanese were superficially clever, but they had less depth. The prize would be his. It was a matter of when, not if.

And how glorious it would be when he returned to Berlin in triumph. How glorious indeed . . .

## **EIGHT**

*Zile Muri-yo*

**W**HEN INDY SAW the local store, he nodded to himself. Of course.

The place sat nine feet off the ground on a platform mounted on eight thick tree trunks. These supports looked to be covered with some kind of grease, probably to protect the wood from moisture and insects, and to keep rats and whatnot from climbing the poles.

Big storm surge managed to wash this far inland? It would pass right under the building. Smart.

Of course, if the wind was strong enough to get through the heavy forest and blow the place off its platform, it would be a nasty fall to the ground.

The stairs looked kind of rickety, lashed together rather than nailed, and it appeared they could be raised using a crank and ropes. The steps—indeed, much of the whole place—seemed to be constructed of bamboo. It was easy to see that there were ongoing repairs—new, green canes were woven into older brown mats. Even so, the steps were more solid than they looked.

Inside, the store was stocked with the usual kinds of items one might expect at an outpost shop. Tools, basic staples—rice, flour, beans, sugar, rum, tobacco—and shelves stacked with work clothes, canvas, and all manner of gear: tents, ropes, water or fuel cans, like that. Should be no problem gathering decent camping supplies.

There was a long rack of blades along one wall, some short, most of them longer—cane knives, machetes, bolos, hatchets, axes, and the like. If you were going to be hacking your way through vines and branches or felling trees, you'd need those.

Pretty well stocked for a small island store. Indy wondered how many people actually lived around here.

Marie approached an old man sitting in a rattan rocking chair—there was no counter per se—and began speaking to him in a dialect totally unfamiliar to Indy.

Indy glanced at Mac, who shook his head. He didn't know it, either.

Didn't sound anything like French or Creole. Amazing how many languages there were, and how small the pool of speakers for some of them. Indy had been in places in South America where a village of fifty or sixty were the only people in the world who spoke their

particular patois. If they were suddenly wiped out by some natural disaster, the language would vanish with them.

Indy wandered around, mentally shopping. Shelter, food, those were important—

Hello?

He came to a lane on the floor under a shelf that was six or seven feet long and maybe a foot and a half deep, stacked with boxes of firearm ammunition. All kinds—rifle, shotgun, pistol, a lot of different calibers. Several thousand rounds.

Here was a stroke of luck. All Indy had was what was in his Webley, plus a few tarnished and half-corroded cartridges in his pant pocket—twelve, fifteen in all. While good ammo was more or less waterproof, when it was your neck on the line, you wanted to be sure. The two loudest sounds in the world, so the old joke went, were *click!* when you were expecting *bang!* And *bang!* when you were expecting *click!*

Fresh, undunked-in-the-sea ammunition would be good.

Heck, they even had some for Mac's puny little .32 auto. How unlikely was that?

Mac, who had been looking around, drifted over.

Indy said, "Hey, check it out. We can grab a box of ammo for your peashooter and one for my more manly revolver."

Mac blinked. "Might want to grab more than one box each."

Indy turned to look at Mac. "What are you talking about?"

"Think about it, Jonesy." He held his right hand out, palm up, in the direction of the ammo.

Indy did.

"Uh-oh . . ."

"Right," Mac said.

They were on a small island. Mostly jungle or not, it wouldn't be big enough to support many large predators. Could be some game here, but again, it wouldn't be in the rhino/elephant size range. Pigs, maybe, or even some cattle; deer, birds, squirrels, like that. If there weren't many big cats or wolves or bears, things dangerous to humans, then why all the ammunition?

Who would be buying it?

What would they be shooting at?

"I don't think I like this," Mac said.

Indy shrugged. "We are here now. We'll just have to be vigilant."

"Yeah? What are we looking out for?"

He shrugged again. "Marie might know."

"We should ask her."

Indy collected four boxes of ammo for each of their guns. Just to be on the safe side . . .

Forty-five minutes in the store gave them everything they needed. Mac went to dicker with the old man, who apparently spoke enough French to bargain. Marie approached Indy.

“I have hired a local man, Batiste, and some porters.”

“Do we need porters?”

“Unless you want to haul our gear and chop our way through whatever forest it takes to reach wherever we are going?”

“I see your point. Porters would be good.”

“Batiste will meet us here shortly and take us to Efreye, his village. We’ll stay there tonight and get started in the morning.”

Indy nodded. “Got a question for you. Seems like an awful lot of ammunition for a little country store.” He nodded in the direction of the ammo aisle.

“It is harder to get such things with the war,” she said. “Armies shooting at each other and all, takes a lot of bullets. Père Ours stocks up on such whenever he can.”

“Still, there are rounds for shotguns, rifles, pistols, two dozen different calibers. Seems like a bit much for such a small island.”

She gave him a small shrug. “Men want guns and they like variety. *C'est la vie.*”

She was right and it made a certain sense; still, something didn’t quite ring true about her answer. She had been quick to agree to help them. Maybe she had an ulterior motive? But—what would it be? She couldn’t have known they would show up.

A mosquito buzzed him, and Indy shooed it away. “Come dark, these things will drain us dry. I hope Papa Bear here has 6-12.”

“There is a bathhouse in the village,” she said. “After we get cleaned up, the locals have a lotion that keeps the insects at bay. Much better than the commercial stuff. Lets your skin breathe.”

Indy nodded. He liked that idea.

What the professors didn’t tell you when you were a freshly minted graduate student all eager to travel to exotic places in search of archaeological wonders were the small things: the heat, cold, dust, the sand. The lack of drinkable or bathing water. They didn’t talk about the mosquitoes, chiggers, and ticks; the spiders and scorpions and leeches.

He recalled a time in some tropical outpost once after a hard rain. Had that been India? The Malay Peninsula? Hard to say, the way these

adventures ran together. What he wouldn't forget was the lawn in front of the house where he was staying, which seemed to be undulating after the daylong downpour—and the moment he realized it was because there were thousands of *slugs* oozing across it . . .

You learned to live with such things if you were going into the field; it was part of the business. Finicky archaeologists didn't last long. They stayed home and taught full-time.

Not that he was finicky, but there were days when the lecture hall had a great deal of appeal. No dust. No broiling sun.

No snakes . . .

Whatever Marie was keeping to herself, it wouldn't matter if they could find the Heart of Darkness and get on their way. Let her have her secrets. Everybody deserved a few. Lord knew he had plenty of his own. The Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Grail, and the Peruvian werejaguars, even that Chinese tomb and its black pearl, just to consider the first few that came to mind . . .

Boukman listened to the speech from his slaves who could still talk, the potioned ones, and frowned at what he heard. The white men had people watching them, followers from the mainland. The Japanese who pretended to be Chinese, and the German who passed himself off as Dutch, and this was not at all to Boukman's liking, oh, no. Somehow these people had fastened on to his two white men, and that would not do. They were his, they had been sent for him, and no one was going to get *between* him and them.

He pondered his options as he sat in his hut. As long as the white men with Marie were running around loose in the jungle, they might be at risk from these new threats. What the Germans and the Japanese wanted was of no importance, but that they might interfere with whatever it was Boukman was supposed to do with the *imen blan?* *Non.* Not to be allowed.

The Dream had come for a reason, it always did, and while he didn't immediately know what that reason was, eventually it was revealed.

The white men were here for a purpose, and *they* knew what it was. He had intended to watch them and allow them to lead him to whatever it was. But accidents happened, especially when men with guns were involved, and what if the *imen blan* were injured or killed before he could reap their secrets? Perhaps a mistake on his part.

So. A new idea:

He would ask them. They would tell him. And then he could see exactly how it concerned him.

His slaves, standing silently and with infinite patience, were awaiting his command.

Boukman gave it to them.

## NINE

“JUST AS YOU SAID, Yamada-san. They went to the island store. They are now on their way to the village near the largest of the sisal plantations.”

Yamada nodded. “Keep them under observation. They will not leave this late in the day. Have the men set up the camp here. No fires, we must stay invisible.”

“*Hai*, Yamada-san.”

As the evening drew near, the insects were already swarming, kept from alighting upon them only by the oily lotion that covered every inch of their exposed flesh. The buzzing of tiny wings was constant, and Yamada had learned to tune it out long ago, enough so that he was not bothered by it. It was a part of the tropics, where mosquitoes sometimes grew so large that even a shirt was no protection against their bites, were it not of a thick and heavy weave. He had seen the bloodsucking insects clustered so thick on comrades’ clothes that it looked as if they were wearing fur . . .

“Suzuki-san, please also to post a sentry. I should not like to be joined in my tent by a . . . pig in the middle of the night.”

Suzuki grinned. He gave Yamada a slow, military bow, no more than a nod. They were not really speaking of pigs.

Of Gruber, there had been no sign—with luck, Henri’s avowal that he would not tell the German of the archaeologists’ departure would hold, and Gruber would not be a factor. A wise man did not depend on luck, however, and the German could not be entirely discounted. Yamada had heard of his exploits. He was intelligent, and while too much of that could be a handicap, just enough was most dangerous. Best to keep one’s guard up.

In *Bushido*, the samurai’s code of behavior, sneak attacks were allowed—and should be expected. If an enemy leaped out of the bushes and cut you down, you had no one to blame but yourself. You knew you had an enemy, and you knew a bush could conceal him. Until he was no longer among the living, he was always a threat, and even gone he might have family or comrades who would avenge him.

Death was not a concern—the way of the samurai was found there—but being caught unprepared? Dishonorable, that, and worse than mere death.

## *Efreye Village, Zile Muri-yo*

The village was bigger than Indy would have guessed. Forty, forty-five small huts, bamboo with palm-thatched roofs, along with a couple of larger communal structures of sturdier wood, one of which was the bathhouse. In the tropics, the heat, humidity, and sweat combined to make you feel pretty grubby even after one day, and a wash would feel good.

The villagers had cooking fires going. They didn't rush over with enthusiasm to greet the new arrivals, but neither did they start shooting, and Indy saw several shotguns leaning against walls or trees. *Subdued* was the word that came to mind.

Of course, it was getting near dark, and subsistence villagers generally had long days just to keep food on the table, so maybe they were all tired. Indy was tired, for certain.

Marie introduced them to Batiste, a tall, well-built man of perhaps thirty with dark skin and a very white smile, who wore old but clean and mended khaki trousers and shirt, with a bandanna tied around his forehead. He sported a machete as long as his arm and a holstered pistol on his belt as well as a short lever-action rifle. Batiste spoke French, Creole, English, and whatever the locals mostly used, which seemed to have a lot of glottal stops and a definite singsong tonality to it. African roots, to be sure.

"Bathe or eat first?" Marie asked.

"I'm good either way," Mac said.

Indy shrugged.

"I think I will use the bathhouse," Marie said. "Batiste will provide you with food and show you a hut for the night."

Marie headed off, and Batiste said, "Gentlemen, this way please."

They followed him to a hut. There was a kerosene lamp inside, short-wickied but bright enough to reveal a circular room sufficient for four or five people to bed down. The floor was of packed earth, no furniture save for some rolled-up sleeping mats. The door was heavy bamboo, and there was a hardwood bar on the inside that slid into hoops on the wall to keep company from walking in unexpectedly.

Indy took notice of that but said nothing.

Back at the large communal fire, people were eating roast beast and some kind of tuber, and both Mac and Indy took wooden platters and served themselves. The meat was good, juicy if a little tough, and seemed vaguely like pork. The tubers tasted like a cross between a yam and a carrot. There was some kind of spicy ale-like drink. Indy had eaten a lot worse. He recalled once drinking an alcoholic brew made by the women in a village in South America—one that was

fermented by the women spitting into it. He'd eaten fried scorpion and beetle larvae, too.

Finicky archaeologists didn't last long, but there were things even the stouthearted would avoid when they could.

Indy wandered around, cataloging the village with an anthropologist's gaze. Definitely subdued. He didn't see any small children, and every person he passed, man or woman, would glance at him, take heed of him, and then look away. Not much on foreigners, these folks.

He found himself standing outside one of the larger structures, and even though the big window was covered by a sheet of yellow cotton, he could see the glow of a lamp inside.

A woman moved in front of the window, backlit by the lamp. He couldn't see details, only a silhouette on the shade, but he could tell by the motions that she was combing her hair, and that she didn't seem to be wearing any clothes.

This would be the bathhouse, then. And in all likelihood, that would be Marie.

Despite the juicy meat he was still eating, Indy's mouth seemed suddenly very dry. He turned away. He didn't want to seem a peeping Tom. Not that he could see anything, not really—but there was nothing wrong with his imagination . . .

Easy, Indy. The woman is young enough to be your daughter. *But*, said a little voice inside his head, *she's not, is she?*

*And there is something she's not telling you. Might be wise to keep your distance, hey?*

Next to the ebbing campfire, Indy, Mac, Marie, and Batiste sat or squatted, drinking a bit more of the local brew. Indy had washed—the bathhouse consisted of a planked bamboo floor and a couple of barrels of clean water. You soaped up, using some kind of local plant to make a lather, poured dippers of water over yourself until you were rinsed clean, then dried with several small towels, which were not much larger than washcloths. The water ran down you, through the slats, and onto a slightly angled floor that allowed it to drain into a small ditch. You blotted what remained and came away with the dirt and sweat cleaned off. It wasn't a giant, claw-foot enamel tub at the Ritz, but it did the job.

Citronella candles burned, filling the night air with an acrid, lemony-smelling smoke that kept the bugs from swarming you while you stood there wet and naked. This was typical of tropical bathing houses, and looked much like those Indy had seen in Indonesia, where

people would wash this way daily, sometimes more than once. There was a jar of lotion near the door, the bug stuff, he guessed, and he slathered on some of that. Didn't smell too bad, and was less oily than 6-12.

At the fire again, Mac said, "So, you feel confident that you know our destination?"

Batiste shrugged. "Confident, monsieur? No, I cannot say that. There is a place, nearly as far from here as it can be on the island. Nobody goes there, and the story is that bad ju-ju awaits anybody who dares. My father told me this, his father told him, and *his* father told my grandfather."

"Never curious?" Mac asked.

"My father had it that anybody who neared the place would go blind, his flesh would rot, his family jewels would fall off, and he would be damned to spend ten thousand years chewed on by ants. As a boy, I was not curious enough to test it."

"Hmm," Mac said. "I can understand your reluctance."

Batiste said, "I am less afraid of such things now. I have some protection against curses." He reached up and gripped something unseen under his shirt.

"Any idea what it's supposed to be?" Indy asked. "This place?"

"No. The story speaks of a gris-gris there—what the form is, they do not say. Only that the site is cursed and horrors await unwary visitors."

Indy nodded. Of course. What else was new?

He knew those terms: *Ju-ju*. *Gris-gris*. They came out of Africa, and generally referred to fetishes imbued with magic. Sometimes small leather bags of things blessed by a witch doctor, fingernails, hair, stones, animal teeth, but they could be other items—skulls, bones, or jewels. A black pearl would fit in.

Once, when he was young and thought he knew it all, Indy would have scoffed at such things as magic. He was a scientist, an educated man, not superstitious. But—after dealing with the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Grail? Seeing men—and a woman—turn into big spotted cats? A dragon? Only an idiot would continue to ignore the possibilities. Science did not have all the answers, and whatever else he might be, he wasn't an idiot.

Well, not *most* of the time . . .

"How long do you think it will take us to get there?" That from Marie.

Batiste shrugged again. "I cannot say. We must go through the densest forest—the cliffs on the south side and the northeast corner of

the island are impassable on foot, there are ravines and vertical rock faces, so we cannot bypass the jungle that way. We might take a boat to the southeast point and try to ascend the cliff there, but the sea offshore is full of jagged coral reefs, bad currents, and rips, and teems with sharks. More than a few boats have been wrecked on that coast. There is a dead zone in the water—you know the term *Langmuir circulation*? No fish swim in it, and a man who drowns there will float in circles for days or weeks until his body rots. Not even the crabs will feed on him.”

“Nice,” Indy said.

Batiste continued: “If we went that way, did not founder, and managed to make shore, the climb would be difficult and risky at best. The rock is rotten—it seems solid, but it can crumble under your feet. Men have fallen attempting it, and carrying supplies and without training? I would not try it.”

“So we take a hike in the woods,” Indy said.

“*Oui*. There are a few trails for the first part, but the terrain is rough and rugged all the way, beset with streams, rocks, gullies, and most of it heavily forested. We must move with caution.” He paused. “There are many dangers in the jungle.” He glanced at Marie.

Indy caught the look. Marie gave no indication that she had.

Batiste said, “It will not be—how you say?—a walk in *le parc*.”

“We can walk in the park at home if that’s all we want,” Indy said.

“Two days, three?” Batiste shrugged yet again. “It will take as long as it takes.”

“And on that note, I’m going to turn in,” Indy said. “We want to get started early, while it’s still relatively cool, right?”

Batiste nodded. “*Oui*.”

“It has been a long day,” Mac said. “I believe I will sack out as well.”

“See you in the morning,” Marie said.

Indy watched her walk away.

He shook his head. A thing of beauty was a joy forever, and it had been a long time since he had passed this much time with an attractive woman who wasn’t trying to kill him . . .

Gruber’s scout reported back, and the doctor noticed that the fellow, a pale-skinned blond, had mosquito bites all over his face.

Gruber looked at Schaefer, who nodded. It was Gruber’s operation.

“Herr Braun, tropical insects carry a number of unpleasant diseases. Why is your skin not coated with indalone?”

“Colonel Doktor,” Braun said, “the repellent has a distinct smell. I did not wish for someone with a sharp nose to catch the odor as I spied upon them and perhaps wonder as to its source.”

Gruber shook his head. Well. You had to give the SS elite their due. That they would suffer was a testament to their stoicism; that they would consider it necessary indicated intelligence and proper training. All reasons why the Reich would eventually prevail. Truly dedicated men would do whatever was necessary for victory, that was the German way.

Too bad the kaiser had not realized this in the Great War—Germany would now run the world and Gruber would not have to be in this particularly nasty part of it . . .

“Very good, Sergeant. I have a lotion for you to treat the bites. Your report, please.”

Sergeant Braun nodded. “Our quarry is at the local village, and they seemed to have bedded down for the night. The two men are in a hut. The woman is in a different hut, alone. A group of locals have collected gear from the store and returned it to the village.”

“And your guess as to their intentions?”

“They will leave the village in the morning. Early, first light, to make best use of the relative coolness before the day heats up.”

Gruber nodded. “Any signs of the Japanese?”

“I did not see any, Doktor. One of our men remains hidden, watching, but trying to trek through the jungle any distance in the dark would seem unlikely. If the Japanese are about, they will likely stay where they are for the night.”

Gruber nodded. Yamada and his people were here, which was bad. Then again, if Gruber’s men had not seen them, perhaps they had not seen the SS troops, either. The advantage might be his—he knew Yamada was here, but Yamada might not know *he* was.

Any advantage was a good one. Always.

“Good work, Sergeant.”

After Braun and Schäfer had departed, Gruber lay down upon his cot in the small tent. It was dark, and the day’s heat was still oppressive, no breath of wind stirring. Even with a net over the tent’s doorway, insects had gotten inside, and their incessant buzzing was annoying. His repellent kept the bugs from biting him, but their small noises made sleeping difficult. Well. He would have to get used to them, wouldn’t he? They might be here for several days, and staying awake that long would hardly be likely.

## **TEN**

INDY WAS BEING chased by somebody—Nazis, agents of Kali, some South American werecats, all of whom were yelling or roaring for his blood. He moved as if his legs were mired in glue, so s-l-o-w-l-y! but he managed to get to a building and inside. He slammed the door behind him, but his pursuers began pounding on the portal, on the walls, trying to break in—

Indy came awake suddenly, aware of a drumming noise.

Where was he—?

He looked around, saw Mac getting to his feet, drawing his little pistol from his pocket. The dim light of a kerosene lantern suffused the inside of the little hut. Right, yeah, the village—

The hammering on the door and walls grew louder. It vibrated the building, shaking the place like an earthquake.

“What the hell is going on?” Indy said. He reached for his own gun.

Mac shook his head. “I don’t know. But I see why that bar for the door was installed, and I’m glad I slid it into place!”

The pounding grew yet louder, and its sound was joined by something else, a kind of monotonic drone, like that of a man-sized bumblebee.

Oh, man! Now what?

The bar on the door seemed to be holding, but both Mac and Indy pointed their guns in that direction. Whatever it was—or whoever it was—if it came through the door, it was going to be dining on lead . . .

Abruptly, the pounding stopped. The drone continued.

“What the devil is that?”

“Some kind of chant, sounds like,” Indy said.

The sound started to fade.

“Moving away,” Mac said. “Let’s have a look.”

“Are you crazy! Get away from there!”

Too late. Mac already had the door halfway open.

Indy gripped his revolver tightly, his hand sweaty.

Mac stuck his head outside. “Oh, my.”

“What?”

Despite himself, Indy stepped forward to look.

The village fires had all died down, but there was enough of a moon and stars in the clear sky so that they could make out forms moving away from the hut. People, five or six of them, shambling, walking in a slow shuffle.

Who were these guys?

Beyond them, Indy saw Marie. She stood there, dressed in a long white robe, her arms spread wide, speaking softly in a language he didn't recognize.

Indy pushed the door open and stepped outside. He started for Marie.

Batiste appeared as Indy neared the young woman. "Do not break her concentration, monsieur!"

"What is going on?" Indy said. "Who the hell are these people?" He waved his revolver at the retreating forms.

Marie, Indy saw, had her eyes closed and was still speaking softly. She had what looked like a cross drawn in dark paint on her forehead.

Mac apparently didn't hear what Batiste had to say:

"Marie?"

Indy looked at Mac. "Shh!"

Too late. Marie's eyes fluttered open. Then they rolled back, revealing nothing but white, and she collapsed onto the ground.

Passed out—

The drone Indy had heard began to rise again.

The retreating forms stopped, turned around, and began to move toward them.

"Back off!" Indy yelled, pointing his gun at the closest one.

Batiste said, "She has lost them! Help me with her! We must get inside the communal house!"

They, whoever they were, kept coming.

Indy aimed at the nearest one. "Okay, you asked for it!"

He squeezed the trigger. The revolver's roar was very loud in the night. He saw the man take the bullet, saw the impact, saw it punch a hole in the cloth of his shirt over his chest—

—but the wound didn't bleed. And the guy never slowed a step, he just kept coming in that shuffling walk—

Oh, damn—!

"Help me with her!"

Indy squatted and helped Batiste lift Marie, who was out cold and deadweight. Batiste got her over his shoulder and stood. "This way, quickly!"

Mac fired three fast rounds from his pistol—*bam-bam-bam!*

Then Indy saw Mac blow by him, headed for the communal building.

What—?

“Our visitors seem to be bulletproof!” he said in passing. “I’ll get the door!”

Well. This explained the big supply of ammunition at the store, didn’t it? How many shots did it take—?

Inside, Mac shut and barred the door as Batiste laid the inert form of Marie onto a pad.

Indy looked around and realized that the place was full of villagers. All of them standing and watching, not saying a word.

The pounding began.

“Some water,” Batiste said. “We must wake her.”

Somebody came forward with a bamboo cup. Batiste sat Marie up, poured the water over her face.

She awoke, sputtering. Looked at Batiste with a glare that would have melted stone, then her face cleared. “I am okay. Give me room.”

Batiste stepped away and motioned for Indy to do the same.

Marie stood, wiped her face with her hands, and began to speak again. Softly, musically. The tone had a hypnotic quality, lulling . . .

The hammering on the door stopped. The drone of the voices from outside began to fade. In the light of the lamps, Indy saw that the water had partially washed away the cross painted on Marie’s forehead. Only it didn’t seem to be paint. He was pretty sure that it was blood—

\* \* \*

Yamada was only half asleep when he heard the soldier rush into the campsite. The man’s voice was low but excited to the point of hysteria. Yamada came up, grabbed his Nambu pistol, and opened the mesh flap over the tent’s door. “What is it?”

His second in command, Captain Suzuki, stood there holding a lantern in one hand, his drawn sword in the other. Yellow light gleamed from the mirror-bright surface of the katana’s patterned steel. “Trouble at the village,” Suzuki said.

“What kind of trouble?”

The scout, a young man from Tokyo named Ito, looked at Suzuki. The officer nodded. “Speak!”

Ito told the tale, and it sounded so fantastic that he was sure Suzuki was going to slap the boy and call him a liar. Yamada held up a hand

to caution the captain.

"You are dismissed," Yamada said, after the boy was done. "I will speak with the captain."

Yamada considered what he was going to tell Suzuki. Until now, he had not been certain of the truth of his mission. Oh, he felt that the powers-that-were at home *believed* it, and his duty was not to question them. He would go and do as he was ordered, but in his heart he had not been convinced. At this juncture, it seemed less than useful to maintain the secrecy he had kept for himself.

Suzuki had not *needed* to know more, but given the circumstances, Yamada reasoned that it was advisable to tell him. Ignorance might be cause for failure, which could not be allowed.

"Come into my tent," Yamada said. "There are things you need to know."

\* \* \*

Braun looked shaken, and Gruber could understand why. It was not something an ordinary soldier could easily deal with, this kind of information. The cat, as the English said, was out of the bag, and there was no way to put her back in, not now.

"Perhaps, Kapitän Schäfer, you would assemble the men?"

"Jawohl."

Once the men were gathered around the lamp, Gruber began:

"That which I am about to tell you must never be repeated elsewhere, to anyone, do you all understand? To do such will be considered treason against the Reich and worth the firing squad or piano wire around your throat, is that clear?"

There came a murmur of assent.

"You are probably aware that Reich scientists have been working to create ways to make better soldiers. There are chemicals, drugs created in our laboratories that will make a man stronger, able to stay awake longer, and the like. Even now, some of the soldiers in certain elite units have access to these drugs, the new anabolic agents and amphetamines. But these drugs have limits and side effects, and are not yet perfected."

The men nodded but said nothing. He was the doctor, he would explain, they knew this.

"Some cultures have developed similar things. The Thuggees have the Black Sleep of Kali Ma; the Peruvians have the coca leaf mixed with certain roots; there is a kind of mushroom tea in central Mongolia that allows a man to run for miles without feeling hunger or tiredness." He looked at them.

"The Africans stumbled upon a formula centuries ago. How such ignorant savages managed this seems beyond belief, but they did. They created a concoction that makes a man stronger, immune to pain, able to heal faster, run farther, leap higher. It was kept a secret known only to a few, who used it to their own ends.

"Such abilities would be a great asset to the German armies, *nicht denken Sie?*"

Yes, they nodded, they surely did think so.

"This African formula was, during the slave days, written down, then transported here to Haiti. To this very island. This is the reason we have come, to collect it. And it should be apparent that somebody local has access to this formula.

"The men we are following are going to lead us to it."

One of the men, a corporal, looked somewhat dubious.

"Herr Wagner? You have questions?"

"It—it seems . . . rather . . . fantastic, Colonel."

Sergeant Braun said, "Wagner, I saw a man shot three times with a pistol who paid it no more attention than he would a bee's sting. Last I beheld him, he was walking into the forest, and I saw not a drop of blood on him."

That drew a disturbed murmur from the others.

"The sergeant is correct. It is not your duty to worry over the effectiveness of this formula, only to assist me in retrieving it. I tell you all this because it may be that some of the men who have taken this drug might stand against you, and you need to be aware that they will be formidable adversaries. With luck, we won't have to find out how formidable, but whatever it takes, we must retrieve this for the Fatherland. If it costs all of us our lives, that will be a small price to pay."

The men nodded. They were soldiers. They would follow their orders. Good Germans did that.

## **ELEVEN**

“**Z**OMBIS?” MAC SAID.

Indy said, “The undead.”

Marie looked at Indy. “You know the term?”

“Yes, of course, but—”

“—you thought it was just a tale to frighten children?”

Indy shrugged. “Actually, I didn’t think that much about it at all. Most cultures and societies have stories about the undead: ghosts, wraiths, vampires, lich. It’s a common trope—I’ve always liked the one about Saint Felix, Saint Regula, and Saint Exuperantius.”

Mac said, “Who?”

Indy said, “You really do need to catch up on your history, Mac. They were Catholics, decapitated by the Romans in the year A.D. 286. The story goes, after they were killed, they picked up their heads and climbed to the top of a hill, where they dug graves and buried themselves.”

“There’s a nice trick,” Mac allowed. “Much more impressive than water into wine.”

“Yeah. If you believed they could do that, you might be a tad nervous about running into them on a battlefield.”

The dawn had laid her tentative fingers upon the night, and Marie had assured them that the group of *zombis* would not be able to return for a while. She said, “There are strange things under Heaven, messieurs. Science cannot explain everything.”

Indy nodded. He had plenty of reason to agree with that. He had experienced some unbelievable things himself. Whatever your beliefs, you had to develop a pragmatic view of things.

“Most of what I know comes from India or the American South. What’s the local version?”

“In Vodoun—they call it ‘voodoo’ in the American South—priests and priestesses—hougan and mambo—communicate with gods and demigods, the loa. In exchange for the use of their bodies—acting as ‘horses’—the possessed are granted certain powers. Among these, depending on the loas involved, is the ability to raise and animate the dead.”

Indy nodded. He knew that.

Mac gave her a funny look.

She ignored Mac. “There are two kinds of *zombi*: the True Risen and *les enfants du breuvage magique*—the Children of the Potion. The latter are more common. To make these, a houngan uses certain drugs derived from the datura flower, mushrooms, and other plants found on our islands. Liquid from a certain kind of toad. A rare lizard’s blood. Fish roe. There are different formulas in various branches of the art; some work better than others.

“By this method, a victim is poisoned, put into such a deep trance that he or she appears to be dead. A funeral is held, the body is buried, and the houngan comes back later and digs the victim up. He—sometimes she—then controls the victim with drugs, forcing them to do whatever the houngan wants.”

Indy nodded. Fascinating stuff. He knew some of it, of course, but he hadn’t heard these particulars before.

“The other kind of *zombi* is much less common. Only a bokor, a master houngan, has the power to bring the true dead back to life. It demands great resources and supernatural concentration. A hundred years ago, at his peak of power, bokor Boukman, the strongest of all Vodoun priests, was supposedly able to raise and keep fifty or more of the dead up and animated at once.”

Indy and Mac exchanged glances.

“Today the strongest bokor might manage twenty, and his control of that many would be less than ideal. Much easier to use the potion, even though those slaves are not as durable.”

“And you shooed them off,” Indy said. “So . . . ?”

“Yes. I am a mambo. What I did was small compared with the man who brings forth and keeps the *zombis* under his hand. I cannot raise the dead or control them on my own. I was able to divert them only by pretending to be the bokor who owns them and sending them away.”

Indy held back a sigh. Great. Never happened lately but that a woman he found attractive had some kind of kink. What was it with him and bad girls? A Vodoun priestess. Terrific.

“The bokor will not be pleased when they return without you,” she said.

“Me? Us?”

“Yes. There is some kind of link here. Boukman feels things, and he must believe there is power to be had.”

Mac said, “Boukman? What, he’s the grandson of the powerful wizard you mentioned?”

She shook her head. “No. He is the same man.”

Mac frowned. “How old is he?”

"No one knows for sure. Two hundred years, perhaps more."

"Bosh!" Mac said.

But Indy knew such things were possible. He could hardly forget the Guardian of the Holy Grail, a knight from the First Crusade, and all that transpired in the Canyon of the Crescent Moon. Kept alive by the power of the Grail, that knight had to have been born around the time of the Battle of Hastings, in A.D. 1066, making him at least 870-something. Two hundred? A drop in the bucket next to that. Still . . .

Another old guy giving him grief . . .

Marie said, "Boukman is my great-great-great-and-then-some-uncle, and whatever his age he is still the most powerful bokor in the land. I cannot stand against him, my magic is pale and small. I will do what I can, but if you still wish to seek this artifact, we must hurry. The sooner we can leave this island, the better."

"I hear *that*," Indy said.

Not once while he was teaching Introduction to Archaeology had a magical old man ever wandered into his class to disrupt it. Not once. Still, living to be two hundred or eight hundred might be something useful to know—long as you didn't feel or look that old. That knight had been in pretty good shape for somebody who'd been around since the Crusades, but he didn't look all that spry. Had more wrinkles than a laundry on wash day.

Boukman knew before the *zombis* told him what had happened. They would not have returned without their quarry unless there had been some kind of magical interference.

So. *Petite* Marie had developed some skill in the art. She came of good stock, so it was perhaps not altogether unexpected that she would become a mambo of some power. He had not spoken to her in years, not since she was a child, and he had not kept track of her as perhaps he should—there were no rivals near his strength on the islands, but some who might cause trouble if allowed to grow, and he had spent more time watching and dealing with them. Those with potential to be a danger to Boukman were eliminated before they reached that stage. Women took longer to mature in the art, and while they could be formidable, little Marie wasn't old enough to have gotten very strong yet.

Then again, she *bad* turned his *zombis* back.

Interesting . . .

Well, he could prevent that, now that he knew of it. A few words added to a spell, and his slaves would be immune to any blandishments Marie could offer. She would realize this, of course, but

it did not matter—she did not have the power to match his.

Boukman stood considering things.

This was a sign of some kind. Extracting the meaning from such signs was often tricky, but it was always there.

What did it mean?

He had, he decided, moved too early. The gods or the loa did not want him to know yet, so they had stepped in. Very well. He would back off, be patient, and wait for the right moment. The greater powers apparently wished for the *imen blan* to continue on with their quest. So be it.

Boukman feared nothing natural that walked the land, but he most among men knew better than to challenge the gods. That way lay ruination.

“Go,” he said. “Watch the white men. Stay hidden while you do. You—” He pointed at a man who in life had been a policeman in Port-au-Prince, a strong and fierce fellow. “—return tonight and report.”

There came the nods of acknowledgment.

It was a small island, but there were a score of people involved who normally were not here. He could perhaps use a little more help. “You,” he said, indicating another of the *zombis*, “go and collect the other Children of the Potion. Bring them here.”

The undead shuffled away to their tasks.

After they were gone, Boukman decided that he needed a big meal, one washed down with blood. And human blood would be best.

He felt as if he would need to be fortified. Great things were in the air, and he must be ready to deal with them.

When the Children of the Potion arrived would be plenty time enough. They still circulated blood, and any of them could spare a pint or two without any ill effects—not that it mattered. There were always more of them to be had if needed. Draining one dry would only provide a new possibility for creating another of the undead.

Yamada was ready before dawn, his excitement too much to allow him to sleep. They would have to move with care while stalking their prey, but as thick as the jungle seemed to be, staying unseen ought not to be too big a problem.

He considered the idea of bypassing the archaeologists, of collecting the native guide and questioning him directly, but decided that it was too risky. The man might know where they were going, but the two *gaijin* doubtless had more specifics. This mission was too important to risk it, and the safest course was to simply follow them to the prize

and then collect the formula. Truth was, Yamada didn't know exactly what form that prize was going to *be* in. He might not know it when he saw it; antiquities were not his field of expertise. The second man who had been chosen to offer that aspect of knowledge had yet to arrive in Haiti. The first man selected, from the Imperial Academy in Tokyo, had, in an ironic twist of fate, been on a ship traveling from Hong Kong that had been sunk by a Japanese submarine. Killed their own expert.

Ah, well. It was war. Bad things happened . . .

The American and Englishman certainly knew more about antiquities than did Yamada.

Risking failure was not in the cards he wanted to play.

Suzuki approached, looking a bit eager himself in the dim glow of the lantern.

Yamada looked at him, one eyebrow raising in question.

"I have three men in place," Suzuki offered. "As soon as our prey starts off, one of them will come back and report. We should be able to catch up quickly, and the soldiers following will leave a trail."

"Bread crumbs?"

Suzuki frowned. "Excuse me, Yamada-san?"

"I beg your pardon, Captain. It's an old joke. I will tell it to you sometime." Of course. Even though Suzuki was fairly educated for a military man, any depth in Western fantasy literature was unlikely. No reason he would know the tale of Hansel and Gretel, by the Brothers Grimm—who had undoubtedly lifted it from other sources. And being a pragmatic sort, Suzuki would be quick to notice the obvious—a trail of bread crumbs in the forest would certainly be eaten by insects or animals in a hurry, just as it had been in the fairy tale.

Suzuki nodded as if dismissing the comment. "It is likely that we shall have to stay some distance away," he said. "And probably not wise to follow too directly on their trail, just in case they might be watching for such a thing."

"Why would they do that? They don't know we are here."

"The attack at the village might be repeated," Suzuki said. "They would be unwise to ignore that possibility. Who knows what other dangers might reside in these forests?"

"Yes, of course." He gave Suzuki a slow nod, a military-style bow, to acknowledge his expertise. Honor always had to be served.

Suzuki returned the bow.

"First light won't be long," Suzuki said.

"I am ready," Yamada said.

“Doktor,” Schäefer said.

“Kapitän.”

“My sergeant has sent one of the men back to say that they have discovered the Japanese campsite.”

“Ah, good. And . . . ?”

“They have packed their tents and are prepared to march. Though we have not seen their agents, surely they have men watching our quarry.”

“Of course. When the Englishman and American and their party depart, we must allow the Japanese to follow them first.”

“Ja, of course.”

“It would be best if neither group knew we were trailing them.”

Schäefer nodded. “All is in readiness, Colonel Doktor.”

“Good.”

Schäefer moved off, to unnecessarily inspect his men yet again, and Gruber turned his thoughts back to a question that had been nagging at him: Sergeant Braun’s observation about the incident at the village seemed, as Herr Wagner had said, far-fetched.

Three shots, to the heart?

Only if he had *armor* hidden under his shirt . . .

For certainly, no *medication* would make a man bulletproof. That was beyond any science that Gruber knew or could possibly believe. Perhaps some drugs indeed might raise a man’s pain threshold to such an extent that he could shrug off a wound that was non-fatal. And perhaps even retard bleeding from such an injury—some coagulant, say, that when exposed to free air might do the trick. It would have to be something like that, else the fluid would thicken too much to circulate in the vessels.

Humans could be very fragile or very durable, but they were not invulnerable.

Of course, in the heat of a violent encounter, guns going off and in the middle of the night, Braun’s excitement must have gotten the best of him. What he had taken as fatal gunshot wounds could have, under the circumstances, easily been misconstrued. A handspan to one side would miss the heart and aorta. A small-caliber bullet could glance from a rib, doing little real damage, but appearing to be worse than it was. Some of the most minor wounds bled profusely at first but were not particularly debilitating.

As a doctor, he had seen more than a few strange things when it came to injuries. Once, a man had come to a traveling clinic complaining of a headache. Gruber had not done the initial examination and workup, one of the assistants had, but when he read

the chart and saw the patient, the case had seemed unremarkable. A headache of a few days' duration, not terrible, but annoying. No other significant medical history, according to the chart. The patient was not a drinker or a drug addict, he had no other signs or symptoms, he'd been a farmer.

When Gruber had run his hands over the man's head, he had felt a small bump near the center of the patient's skull, between the frontal and parietal bones, along the coronal suture. He asked about it, but the patient shrugged and said the bump had been there a long time. Years.

Suspecting a tumor, Gruber ordered up a series of Röntgenographs, even though such images of the brain were not always useful. This time, however, they were. Once the pictures were developed, he instantly saw the problem:

Somebody had driven a large nail into the man's head, straight down from the top. Six inches long, and miraculously, it seemed, the nail had not damaged any neural tissue, but had slotted neatly between the left and right hemispheres of his brain.

Gruber had never seen anything like it. Fascinating!

Upon questioning, the man finally admitted, that yes, some years earlier, he had been possessed by a demon, and that the only way to disable the thing had been to attack it where it lived, inside his head. To this end, he had placed the point of a copper nail against his skull and hammered it in. Had to be copper to work, he explained, since steel would eventually rust from the demon's acidic saliva. He had skewered the demon, he said, but not killed it, and so the nail had to remain in place to prevent the creature from escaping to elsewhere in his body, where it might not be so easily reached next time.

Apparently the hair and skin had grown over the nail's head after some time, leaving only the little bump visible from without.

As incredible as this had been, the patient had explained it all in a completely matter-of-fact manner, attaching no significance to the fantastic aspects. It sounded rather like somebody relating offhandedly how he had found a weed in his garden and had pulled it up. *Ja, I had a demon in my head, so I hammered a copper nail into my skull to transfix it. Hardly remarkable, what else could I do?*

Gruber had been more than a little taken aback. He had given the man some pain pills, and after checking on him the next day—the pills had done the trick, his headache was gone—he'd sent him on his way. Pulling the nail out? That might have done more harm than good. If it had been there for years, it obviously wasn't doing all that much damage. Fiddling around inside someone's head was seldom a good idea, given how fragile those tissues could be; besides which, the

patient would not have allowed it anyhow. So there it was.

So, a bullet that should have killed a man but did not? Certainly not the most unusual thing Gruber had ever heard or seen, not even close.

Still, even in such cases as keeping pain at bay and preventing blood loss, it would be a wondrous thing, and the event had provided some evidence of this. Certainly worth the effort to attain the means by which it could be accomplished.

Well, that's what he was here for, *nicht war*? He had a team of crack German soldiers at his command, and on an island this size they could never be all that far from the goal.

It was only a matter of time until he attained it. Then he could go home. And that in itself would be reward enough. To sit in a castle somewhere, dining and drinking with the wealthy. Even though the Führer was not particularly fond of nobility, he probably wouldn't abolish it altogether; there were times when the idea of nobility was useful. Perhaps after the war, Gruber might be able to put a *von* in front of his name and become a baron.

Baron von Gruber—that had a nice ring to it.

No matter, no matter. As a doctor and favored by Herr Hitler, he would be a man of substance. A title was not necessary—if you had enough Reichsmarks, you could buy anything you wanted.

And you could spend them at home, like a civilized person.

## **TWELVE**

INDY WAS WILLING to take what he thought of as reasonable risks, always had been. Now and then, maybe some that, in retrospect, didn't seem so reasonable. But, also being pragmatic when it came to keeping his hide in one relatively unbattered piece, he did ask Marie the question as they were doing final packing to head out, just after dawn.

"So, if your great-great-times-however-many-uncle's friends come to call again and you're taking a nap or something, how do we stop them?"

"It is difficult," she said.

"Yeah, I kinda got that when I saw them shrugging off bullets like they were cotton balls."

"A true *zombi* has no soul, and its body is kept motivated by magic. They feel no pain, no hunger, they do not tire. They are like automata. But for the most part, they are otherwise limited to what human bodies can do—they cannot fly, for instance, nor can they walk on water."

"That's the good news, I suppose."

"Their hearts do not beat, nor do they breathe, but their brains work, after a fashion, as do their eyes and ears. Plug a *zombi*'s ears, it cannot hear. Poke out its eyes, it cannot see. Offer enough injury to its brain, and it will stop it. A hot enough fire will destroy it."

"So you are saying—"

"If you stab it in the eyes, it will be blind. If you lop off half its head, it will collapse. Burn it to ash, it is finished. But a few bullets to the body won't stop it."

"Ah."

Mac sidled over. "What was that last business? I didn't quite catch it."

"Marie says that if our undead friends drop by for more fun and games, we need to shoot their eyes out, chop their heads off, or broil them well done."

Mac raised his eyebrows. "Tricky shooting, trying for the eyes. Perhaps we might wish to hone our machetes and keep a couple within reach. I don't suppose you brought a flamethrower?"

"Left it in my other suit," Indy said.

"Boukman cannot keep many of them animated at once," Marie

said. "Though he has more Children of the Potion he can use."

"They bulletproof, too?"

"They are somewhat hardier than normal people, but not immune to injury in the same way, no. Hard to kill, but it can be done."

"So our best plan is to move fast, get done, and hurry away," Indy said. "Or go and take them all out."

"Yes. I would vote for the former," she said.

Indy shrugged. He liked being proactive when it was useful, but running around hunting down creatures who were hard to kill might take longer than it was worth.

Batiste, who had hired five men to go along, using up a fair amount of Mac's gold coins to convince them it was worth the risk, came to where Indy, Marie, and Mac stood. "The first part of the hike will be the easiest," he said. "There are a number of trails around the village, and we can use these. Perhaps half a day before we have to start finding or making other paths. And the terrain is worse the farther away we travel. The village is on the flattest part of the island; the land grows steeper, rockier, and is crisscrossed with streams, some of which are deep, as well as narrow and quite steep gorges. Some of the streams can be forded; some may require that we construct bridges. The gorges we can avoid, we will circle around; those we cannot bypass, we will have to descend and ascend with care. A distance that can be easily walked in an hour on flat ground might take ten times that long, or longer, in places."

Batiste looked at the sky, which was clear. "We'll get a rain shower later today, probably not much of one."

"Well, we aren't getting any younger," Indy said.

And so they set off.

True to what Batiste said, the first couple of hours were easy going. The path through the forest was wide enough for three people to walk side by side, the dirt well trodden, and only the occasional spider's web or creeper reaching from the woods on either side to impede their progress. Easier to walk around those than to bother cutting them.

He didn't see a single snake, for which he was grateful and somewhat surprised.

Before noon, they had made what Indy would consider substantial progress. Of course, according to Batiste, they would walk eight or ten times the distance that it would take a bird to fly, so a four- or five-mile flight could easily become a thirty- or forty-mile hike, maybe longer; it would depend on what had to be crossed or circumvented.

Indy knew about jungle travel, and the shortest distance between two points might be a straight line in theory, but in practice that was

seldom how you got to do it.

Just once, he'd like to arrive at the site of an archaeological trove, drive up on a nice paved road, collect what he'd come for off a shelf without even having to bend down for it, and go back to his vehicle and drive away. No spiders, scorpions, crazed Nazis, ancient knights, curses, or walking dead. No snakes. Just once . . .

The way his adventures had gone, he wouldn't be at all surprised to look up one day and see a spaceship full of little green men from Mars dogging his heels . . .

He smiled at that image.

As they moved farther from the village, the route narrowed and grew more twisty. The damp-earth and pollen smell of the rain forest intensified. From other, more pungent scents, Indy knew their path had been an animal trail at some point—and that you needed to watch your step. The largest animals here, Marie had told them, were wild pigs, going to a couple hundred pounds and nasty in a pack, but apt to run rather than fight. It was easier to follow the crooked path they created on their meanderings and step carefully than to cut a straight new path. Much easier. He had bought a new pair of leather gloves at the store, to help prevent blisters once they had to start swinging sharp blades to clear their way, but even so, that was hard and sweaty work, and he wasn't looking forward to it.

Still, so far it wasn't so bad, all things considered.

A moment later it was as if they were standing in some god's shower stall. A tropical frog-drowner, so heavy you could barely see ten feet, and accompanied by lightning, thunder, and wind.

If Batiste thought this wasn't much of a rain, Indy didn't want to see what he thought was a hard one.

Batiste came over. He had to yell to be heard over the spatters against the forest's greenery. "We should stop, put up a tarp!"

"Little late to worry about staying dry!" Indy yelled back. But he had a point. Walking in the dark or during a downpour like this was risky. Easy to step into a hole or trip on a root when you couldn't see it.

Dry socks was the other thing they didn't tell you about in school. Indy always tried to bring two or three pairs, stuffed into a waterproof pouch for just such situations as this. Always room for socks . . .

Blisters on your hands were one thing; on your feet, they were ever so much worse. It was sometimes the little things that made a hard trip bearable.

Yamada worked out, alone in the rain.

They were in a small clearing next to a trail, and he was completely soaked, so moving around under the cloudburst didn't make him any wetter.

Their quarry was perhaps half a kilometer away, but they could be a hundred meters and not know it. The rain assaulted the ears, the eyes, the skin . . .

He raised his wooden practice sword, the bokken, into a basic two-handed guard, shifting his weight forward, his right foot leading.

Ready . . .

Kendo was, technically, the way of the sword, though that art was done mostly with bamboo or wooden blades. Iaijutsu was with the live blade and designed for combat, not to strengthen one's spirit, as a *do* usually was. Yes, it was true that an archer who trained diligently in kyudo could hit a target with his arrows, but cultivating one's Zen mind was not the same as skewering one's enemies. Yamada would rather have an angry and excitable archer who could hit his target every time guarding his back than a Zen master who was unruffled, but couldn't shoot straight.

Here, in this tropical hole with the rain pounding the verdant jungle and blurring everything into a torrential gray, Yamada, alone outside the hastily erected tents, did his practice with a wooden sword. No need to expose his precious real blade to such elements unless it was necessary.

He faced an imaginary opponent and lifted his wooden blade high for the cut to the head.

He brought the sword down, hard, drawing back a bit, wrists locked, one hand behind the tsuba, the other at the end for leverage.

"Hah!" The sound was guttural and harsh, not particularly loud against the backdrop of the rain rattling the trees and fat-leaved bushes. It wasn't volume that mattered in the kiai, in any event, but focus. A strong enough kiai had been known to stun an attacker into immobility long enough that he could be cut down.

Had a real attacker been there and this wooden sword been sharp steel, Yamada would have bisected the head to the chin. Even with the bokken, such a blow would have cracked a skull and knocked a man senseless.

In kendo, there were restrictions on where a cut or stab could be offered. The proper targets were the top and sides of the head, the right wrist—but only if upraised, so as to allow blood from it to flow into the eyes—the ribs, and the thrust to the throat. Seven targets, no more. Very stylized. Wearing armor, using bamboo blades—shinai—one might get a bruise now and then, but there was no real danger.

In real combat, there were no limits—you could cut a man off at the ankles or stab him in the groin if you could manage it. Victory was more important than form—though form must be considered. It was possible to do both.

Now Japanese soldiers fought with guns in combat, like other modern armies, and had for a long time. The sword was still carried onto the field of battle, however, and used now and again to dispatch one's enemies.

Wrapped in protective oilcloth in his tent, Yamada had his family katana, wearing the army's cheap furniture and looking like one of the machine-made blades issued to the troops. Many officers did as he did—re-dressed a revered family sword in the handle and guard and sheath of the issue weapon, and tossed the cheap steel blade away. Yamada's katana was four hundred years old, gleamed like a mirror, and had been hammered and folded by a master smith in a time when such a weapon was worth a year's pay. You could see the layers in the polished steel. The hamon—the temper line that gave a hard edge backed by a flexible body—was called cranes-in-flight.

His sword was as beautiful as it was deadly. The sword was the soul of the samurai.

Only a man ready to die would charge a machine gun with nothing save a sword. After the machine gun was blown up by a grenade and the wounded enemies taken prisoner?

A wounded and soon-to-be-dead-anyway captive could be used to practice one's stroke. Any idiot with a strong arm and a sharp blade could lop off a man's head; an expert could slice through the bone and muscle but leave a small bit of skin at the throat, so that the head stayed connected to the body. When someone had elected—or been ordered—to commit seppuku, once the belly was slit, it was appropriate to allow a friend or relative acting as a second to finish the job by taking the head. But—for the second to allow his stroke to completely decapitate the suicide? Well, that was bad form. And practice on living tissue was, in these modern times, harder to manage. At the height of the samurai period, a man allowed to wear the two swords could pick anyone of low status he wished and kill him for any number of reasons, and because he felt like it and needed the practice was enough. No one would blink at such a thing. When a man was hungry and sheep were there, who would speak for the sheep?

Since the wearing of swords had been banned sixty-seven years ago by the Meiji emperor Mutsuhito—a black day, that—the samurai class had been effectively destroyed. Yamada's grandfather had been the last in his family to wear both wakizashi and katana, and Yamada

remembered the old man's stories of how many samurai had taken their own lives on the day the order banning swords as public wear had gone into effect.

"Mutsuhito was possessed of an *akumi*," the old man had told a wide-eyed Yamada when he'd been a boy of but six or eight. "He was not the real emperor, though none dared say so aloud. A powerful evil spirit infested him and bade him destroy the samurai class, and this he did."

The old man would always spit on the ground at this point, and such an action inside the house irritated Yamada's mother no end, but there was nothing she could say about that, either. Her husband's father was not to be berated for such things by a woman.

"Never forget, little Hajime, that you are a samurai, no matter what anyone says. You must learn the code of *Bushido* and live by it."

Yamada had nodded, and he had made some effort to keep to the code. He had learned the arts, martial and intellectual. He could compose poetry, draw with ink and brush; he had even helped cast his own tsuba, the brass guard for his sword, a blade that had belonged to his grandfather, and his grandfather's grandfather before that.

And yes, he had, a few times, availed himself of captives, or even condemned Japanese criminals, to practice his cutting. His sword was a three-body blade, which meant it could slice through three men stacked one upon another. Inscribed into the tang of the blade, hidden under the handle, along with the name of the smith and the season the sword had been made, were the date and name of the man who had performed the body test. Three men had been used. Sometimes it was done with corpses, but in this case the tang recorded that the men used in the test had been alive.

There was a story his grandfather used to tell, about a certain condemned samurai who knew he would be used for cutting practice thus. Denied the right to commit suicide, the night before, the man had gone into the sand garden outside his home for a final meal. He was not kept in prison, of course, Hajime's grandfather had told him, for although he had been forbidden to take his own life, his honor had been sufficient to assure that he would turn up on the appointed morning scheduled for his death. But for his last meal, he had sat down and slowly and carefully eaten several pounds of smooth stones. Enough to fill his belly from top to bottom.

"Stones, Grandfather? Why would he do that?"

The old man had smiled. "Because," he'd said, "he knew that the enemy who had caused his downfall planned to stack him atop other condemned men to blood his new sword. And that the traditional strike is to the belly, below the ribs and above the hips. A well-forged

blade would easily cut through human flesh and a living spine, but a cut powerful enough to bisect two, three, or even four men stacked up on one another? That would take a most sharp blade and a strong arm. And if such a hard cut was swung at a pile of rocks? It would break the steel . . .”

The old man’s laugh stayed with Yamada for a long time. “How clever was that?” he had asked. “The perfect samurai revenge. How clear his mind was, to think of that.”

“Did it?” the young Hajime had asked. “Did the sword break?”

“Oh, indeed! I myself was a witness to the execution. The owner of the blade was an arrogant bastard—rumored to have had family come out of the merchant class—and his katana was a thing of great beauty, forged for him by one of the premier smiths of the day at great cost. It was his pride, and he meant to demonstrate it to the world.

“Shattered as if it were made of glass when it hit. The condemned samurai died slowly, bleeding from the cut that did get halfway through his belly, but he died with a smile on his lips. Later, when it was found out what he had done, condemned men used for sword testing had to be specifically forbidden from swallowing rocks . . .”

Yamada shook his head at the memory. Yes, while some men would be nervously composing their death-poems, the unnamed samurai had been methodically preparing his revenge. What calmness of mind and spirit that had shown.

His own sword was a powerful blade, Yamada’s, and he had used it to release half a dozen souls from their flesh. He was a doctor, and he could heal, but he was also a samurai, and he could kill. Whatever was needed.

He turned, the rain pouring over him like a waterfall, to face another imaginary enemy—

—and saw in the trees a face that was not the least bit imaginary. Watching him.

Without a second thought, Yamada raised his wooden blade and charged at the watcher—

Gruber would have pressed on once the rain began, but he was quick to realize that the American, Englishman, and Japanese wouldn’t be doing so; and since he had to stay behind them and far enough back to avoid detection, then stop they must.

He was eager, but he did not wish to behave rashly.

He was drenched, his clothes soaked, and the tarp that had been quickly stretched and angled with ropes among several trees sagged under the weight of water that sluiced over the lower edge in a

continuous sheet, like a waterfall on a river. The men laughed and joked, but it rained big here, and the lightning and thunder came close together—flash . . . boom!—so you knew the strikes were nearby, and when such happened, the laughter stopped before it nervously began again. The captain had forbidden smoking, and just as well—the gusty wind drove rain under the tarp, and cigarettes not kept in a tightly capped tin would have been too wet to light. But it was warm enough, the rain, the only good point connected to it.

Gruber sipped from a flask of schnapps and watched as the water runoff from the tarp dug a trench in the muddy ground. This would certainly make walking more like slogging until it dried up.

He didn't envy the scouts out there in the jungle with nothing but hats and thin oilskins for protection.

It did not rain this way in Germany. Oh, yes, they got weather, fair and foul, but not this end-of-the-world feeling as a crackling thunderstorm swept over an already fetid jungle, scrubbing all underneath it with a mighty and electrically charged wet hand, leaving ozone in its wake . . .

A summer shower in the Bavarian hills? Yes, one would certainly get wet if caught outdoors, but the promise of a balmy afternoon usually lay past that. And that beautiful, golden, actinic light, right after a rain? Nothing in the world compared to how it was in the Fatherland. Proof that there was a God and He favored Germany above all others.

Ah, home. It was a comforting thought out here in this wet hell, the ideal of it. He would go back in triumph and glory. The war would end, and it would be time to start a family—a sturdy, well-made blond and buxom wife with whom he could produce tall and fair sons and daughters; and since he would be a man of substance, perhaps a mistress or two to keep the fires fanned as he grew older. There had been so little time for that, save a few women he had been with during medical school, local waitresses at the beer gardens, mostly; once, the daughter of a professor, ah, what a sweet and tasty thing she had been. A shame she had moved away, to keep company with a Canadian somewhere in the frozen wastes of North America . . .

Between those images and the schnapps, and with a tarp to keep much of the water off, he could bear up here a bit longer. The end would justify the means.

He heard a noise. It was faint, and he was uncertain of it. There were several fast claps of thunder, far off, and then another sound.

He turned to Schaefer. "Did you hear that?"

"Thunder?"

"No. Something after that."

“A pig,” Schäfer said.

Gruber listened, but the cry was not repeated—or if it was, he couldn’t catch it. It had not sounded like a pig. As a doctor, he had heard many injured men and women yelling over the years, and that’s what it had sounded like to him.

Not a pig.

Some person screaming in pain.

## THIRTEEN

THE WATCHER seemed slow to take notice of Yamada's charge, as if the sight of him somehow did not register.

Yamada splashed through the puddles for four meters—five!—gathering speed on the slick ground, and was but two meters away. And still the man had not moved. Dark-skinned he was, with black hair and eyes, wearing no more than a sleeveless shirt that might have once been tan, and dark trousers cut off below the knee, not even any shoes Yamada could see—

His sprint was fast, and the watcher would have to be able to spring like a rabbit to avoid him now, he would knock him silly with his bokken—

—except that Yamada's speed was *too* fast—he hit a muddy spot and his foot shot out from under him. He lost his balance, slipped and fell, hit on his back, and *skipped* like a flat stone thrown at a pond!—

Yamada cursed as he slid to a muddy stop. By the time he managed to get back to his feet, the watcher was gone.

“*Chikusho!*” he said. A choice word to be employed when in a rage.

A gun went off. Once, twice, three times. Somebody screamed, a sound so horrific it frosted Yamada's entire body with chilblains.

The sound came from the direction in which the watcher must have gone, and without stopping to consider Yamada ran into the forest.

Somebody had shot his watcher, it seemed.

He didn't have far to go to see the source of the terrified yell.

It was not the watcher who had screamed.

Lying on the ground where a tree had fallen and beaten down a wide spot in the brush was one of Suzuki's men. His throat was torn out, blood spraying from the torn vessels in his neck, pumping into the rain and washing onto the soaked ground.

The watcher, who stood over the downed soldier, turned only slightly to regard Yamada, and despite the downpour his teeth and lips were coated with blood as he smiled.

Yamada had no doubt at all what had happened here. He knew in a heartbeat.

He was a scientist, but also a samurai; however, samurai were not immune to superstition. His grandfather had filled his head with tales of spirits, demons, ghosts, and while he had turned away from

such things as he became educated, there was always some doubt . . .

He had fought men in matches where the loser was carried off, and he had killed others with a sword. He was not unused to seeing blood, nor was he a coward. But the sight of the dying man's gore dripping down the jowls of the . . . thing that had bitten his throat out? It was unnatural, this creature. He raised his wooden blade, afraid, expecting that the bokken would be useless. This was no ordinary human—

The thing turned away and lumbered off, moving steadily if not quickly. Yamada stood there, frozen. He should go after it. He should

---

A second later somebody ran toward him from the camp, yelling. "Yamada-san! What is it!"

Suzuki, with another soldier, rifles held ready.

Thank the gods—

"Doctor?"

Yamada pointed at the downed man with his wooden sword.

"What happened?"

"A demon," Yamada said. "A *gaki*."

Suzuki shook his head. "A hungry ghost? Here?" To the soldier, he said, "Go, shoot whatever it is!"

The man ran after the thing, but Yamada knew it was gone. He would not find it. And if he did?

There was nothing to be done for the fallen soldier. His blood had run out and been diluted by the driving rain. He was as dead as they got.

As they made their way back to the impromptu camp, carrying the body of their fallen comrade, Yamada found himself looking carefully at the woods around them. Something evil lived here.

The soldier sent after the killer returned. He had not seen it, he said.

Just as well, Yamada thought. These soldiers were the best in the empire. The dead man had fired his weapon thrice, and surely he had not missed all three times?

Something evil lived here, all right, and it was hard to kill, whatever it was.

"You hear something?" Mac said.

"What, besides the rain, thunder, and trees not fifty yards away burst into splinters by high-voltage electricity?"

"Yes, besides that."

"Nope."

But Indy caught an exchange of looks between Marie and Batiste, as if they were sharing a wordless secret.

“What?”

Before either could speak, as if somebody had shut off a faucet, the rain stopped. Water still dripped from everything—trees and bushes, spattering upon the tarp and the puddles—but the storm had passed.

“Not so bad,” Batiste said.

Mac looked at him as if the man had just grown horns and a forked tail. “A man looking up during that deluge would have bloody well drowned!”

Batiste laughed. “In a hurricane, it will rain like that all day and all night, and the wind will knock down trees and buildings like a child does a house of matchsticks. When you go through *l'oeil*—the eye—of such a storm, the wind comes at you fiercely from one side . . . and then it just . . . dies. Your ears pop, the sky clears, you can see the stars, nothing stirs. Then the wind comes back just as hard, but from the other side. Boats will be torn from their moorings and thrown into the trees a hundred yards from the sea. Houses pushed across fields. A whole village leveled into piles of rubble. The sea will come far inland, and when it ebbs, it takes the living and dead alike. This? This is nothing compared with that.”

Indy nodded. Yes, he had been in typhoons. He understood.

“We should go,” Marie said. “We are not alone in the jungle.”

“We never are,” Indy said. “No help for it. Come on.”

Boukman’s rider today was La Petite Fille, the loa called The Little Girl. Not much was known of her, the little one, and she rarely chose to enter one of the male bokor, preferring women. Even so, from what Boukman knew, few among the living mambo had served as her horse, and there were plenty among the houngan who had never even heard of her. There were myriad loa, and many of them never came to find a human horse to ride.

What worlds, he sometimes wondered, did they visit instead of this one? What creatures did they mount there?

The loa were not gods themselves, only servants of good or bad gods—Bondye or Maldye—but like angels, they had great power. The Little Girl had a particular strength that she could, if she pleased, allow her horse to share: She could speak to women at a distance, and command them to stillness.

Boukman had prepared the ritual sacrifice with care—La Petite had a fondness for fresh fruit rather than blood, and she especially liked syrup made from sugarcane, so sweet it would make you shiver to

taste it. Boukman had already eaten fruit and drunk a cup of this sugared brew, and La Petite was demanding more. He poured the cup and began to sip at it.

*Boisson plus rapidement!* she demanded.

He smiled. "Yes, *ma petite*, I will drink it faster."

He chugged the syrup down. It was too sweet, but he had drunk much worse, more than a few times. Such acts were but means to an end, and had to be endured.

He could feel her contentment growing as the solution filled his belly.

"A small favor," he said aloud, "*s'il vous plaît.*"

*Ask, horse.*

He did.

Her response was, he interpreted, akin to a shrug. A matter of no great importance.

Good. She would allow it.

Boukman smiled.

They buried the dead soldier. The grave was shallow and scavengers would likely dig up the corpse eventually, but that was not to be helped. A few days, a week, and it would not matter to the mission. The man had died doing his duty. That would be reported to his family, and they would take comfort in knowing that. Died in the service of the emperor. Killed honorably in battle. Although what had killed him would not be spoken of in detail. Families did not like to hear that hungry ghosts or demons had taken their sons.

As they were making ready to leave, it was the man from Hiroshima who reported back with the unpleasant news.

Yamada said, "You are certain?"

"*Hai, Yamada-san.*" He bowed to punctuate his comment with the proper respect.

"It could not have been one of the locals?"

"Skin as pale as milk where it was not pinked by the sun. He had a spyglass, a slung rifle, a canvas pack, and while he was not in uniform, he stood and moved like a soldier. He did not see me."

Yamada looked at Suzuki.

Suzuki said, "My men are well trained. They can tell the difference between a European military man and one of the natives."

Yamada nodded. "The Germans."

Suzuki nodded. "It would seem so."

So. A European soldier skulking about in the woods? He might be many things, but the odds were overwhelming that he belonged to Gruber. The Germans had caught up. Not what he had hoped for, but it was what it was, and not a great surprise.

"Should we eliminate him?" Suzuki asked.

"No, not yet. As long as they don't know we are aware of them, it could be to our advantage. Tell your men to pretend they do not know they are being watched. They are not to engage the Germans if they see them, unless attacked directly. We will deal with them when it is to our best advantage."

"*Hai,*" Suzuki said. He nodded at the man from Hiroshima. "You heard the doctor. Tell the others."

The tents were repacked, as much of the water sluiced from them as they could manage. Eventually, the canvas would rot in this climate if not allowed to dry out. They wouldn't be here that long. Already the sun was turning the water to a steamy vapor, the heat beating down on the forest's canopy, lancing to the ground here and there and cooking the wet humus. "Best we get going," Yamada said. "We don't want to allow our quarry too big of a lead."

Gruber said, "Captain? Are we ready?"

"*Jawohl,* Colonel Doktor. Our ranger has reported that the Japanese are on the move."

"And they are unaware of us behind them?"

"My men are most stealthy," Schäefer said. "The Japanese show no indication they are aware of us."

"They are good at that," Gruber observed, "not showing things. One can never be sure what they are thinking."

"They are Orientals. We are *Germans*," Schäefer said, the disdain evident in his voice, and a great deal being said in that simple comparison.

Once, Gruber would have let such comments pass, for he had agreed with them. But this was a mission of critical importance.

"Yes, that is true. But recall how the Japs kicked the stuffing out of the Russians less than forty years ago. Those same Russians who are currently kicking the stuffings out of the German army on the Eastern Front. These little yellow men are not to be underestimated, Captain. Such could be a grave error."

Schäefer nodded, but Gruber knew he was unconvinced. Like most officers, he was certain of German superiority in virtually all areas of human endeavor. Gruber knew the thinking. It had been delivered with lectures from his first days at school, right up through his last

days at medical college—Germans were industrious, inventive, original. Japanese? Well, they were like . . . clever monkeys. Give them a toy, they could take it apart and then copy it, but they would never be able to think it up in the first place. Everything their culture had, they had borrowed from somewhere.

There was an old joke he had heard about the fastest way to defeat the Japanese navy. Allow them to steal the plans for the best Western carriers and battleships, but leave plates missing in the hulls. The Nipponese would copy the plans slavishly, replicate the construction exactly, and the hole would be there when the ships were launched. It must serve a purpose, yes? And believing that, they would leave it, not understanding that it was a trick, and the ships would sink like bricks tossed into the water . . .

It was funny when he had first heard it, but it was not true. *Made in Japan* was considered equal to saying “cheap and shoddy,” but this was not the case in all things.

German steel was famous around the world, and rightly so. But he had seen some of the Japanese handmade swords, and the construction of them was beyond the best German forges in Solingen. Clash a German saber against a Japanese sword? The saber would break first nearly every time. Hardly the creation of clever monkeys, those blades.

In matters of war and death, the Japanese were well practiced.

Yes, yes, it was not in question that those of the Oriental persuasion were inferior to Germans *overall*, but the Americans, like the Russians, had learned that the Nips were not inconsiderable adversaries. The Yanks had been caught with their pants down at Pearl Harbor, and it had been the Japanese who had sunk half the U.S. Pacific Fleet there.

Yamada might not rank among the top German scientists who had ever lived, but he was an educated man who served his emperor and, like all the Japanese, was willing to die for him without a second’s hesitation if that was required. A man who was smart and didn’t care if he died? He could be most formidable. You did not wish to give such a man anything sharp to use against you.

Schäefer could not understand that, but Schäefer was not in command. Gruber was, and he would keep what he had learned in mind. It was all well and good to laugh at the Orientals over a stein of good dark beer with your friends at the *Hofbrau*; it was another thing to be roaming in a foreign jungle with the wily *Dämonen* skulking around the rain forest with you. Spilled beer was of no importance, a joke. German blood on the ground? Not so funny.

## **FOURTEEN**

**M**AC SAID, “My. Quite the stream.”

Indy nodded. The muddy water gurgling past in the channel slightly downhill from where they stood did so in a rush. And it was more like what he’d call a river than a stream, carrying branches and even an entire downed tree by them in the roiling brown flow. Wouldn’t think you could get that kind of flow on an island this small, but—there it was.

They weren’t going to be wading across that. How *were* they going to get past it?

As if reading his thoughts, Batiste said, “The water is too deep, the current too strong to try to ford here. There is a bridge around that bend.”

They followed the edge of the waterway for several hundred yards, rounded the curve, and came to the bridge.

Or rather, what was left of it.

The bridge was a narrow, planked affair, affixed to thick ropes at the base, with thinner lines strung above it as handholds. The four ropes, upper and lower, were laced together with thinner twine, and the lines all looked as if they had been coated with some kind of preservative, creosote or somesuch, to prevent rot. A clever, well-designed, useful construct.

Unfortunately, the big tree to which the ends on their side of the river had been attached had toppled over into the water. The first fifteen feet of the bridge was under the rushing current, along with half the tree’s crown, and the tree had been turned and rolled by that current to point downstream, enough so that the bridge was also twisted to almost a right angle at the nearer end. The fallen tree looked recently felled, probably during one of the storms. The leaves on its canopy were still green.

If you could get to the bridge without being washed away, you’d have to be a fly to walk on it until you were almost all the way across to the other side.

Indy didn’t see a boat anywhere.

“It seems we shall have to make repairs to the bridge,” Batiste said.

“No kidding,” Indy said. “Can’t we find another place to cross?”

“*Non.* The rains have swollen all the streams, and many of them

wind back and forth over most of the island. Too deep to ford during this season, and swimming is risky. One of my men might make it across here with a rope." He pointed at the far shore. "And we could then tie a dragline, onto which we could hand-over-hand our way against the current, but our supplies would suffer from the immersion. A slip of the hand, and one would be carried away. A strong swimmer might eventually make it to shore, but maybe not. There are logs and brush being carried downstream that might ram into anybody crossing on a dragline, too. The bridge is better."

"How do we fix it?"

"We have had some experience with such matters. It is not complicated, though also not easy."

Indy said, "Story of my life."

Marie smiled at him. "We shall have some time while the bridge is being repaired. Perhaps you can tell me some of your story?"

He returned her smile. He had a weakness for smart and capable women, always had been that way.

He'd never dated a witch before, though.

Well, at least not to his knowledge.

"Maybe," he said, "we could trade stories."

Batiste and his men had apparently come equipped for stream crossings.

Indy and Marie watched as one of the men, four coils of rope over his shoulders and chest like bandoliers, scurried along the top of the downed tree and into the branches.

"Moves pretty good," Indy observed.

"The children here learn to climb trees as soon as they can walk. That is the easy part," she said.

They watched as the man made it to the straining ropes holding the bridge. He uncoiled one end of one of the ropes and began to make it fast to one of the base lines. Because he was curious as to just how much Marie knew about such things, he asked: "What kind of knot is he using?"

"A sailor's grip hitch," she said, without hesitation. "Better than a constrictor hitch for attaching a small rope to a larger one. Harder you pull, the tighter it gets."

She looked at him. "You know about knots?"

"I got the merit badge when I was in the Boy Scouts," he said.

The man finished the first knot. He moved to the handhold rope and used a thinner line to connect to it.

The third and fourth connections were going to be trickier, since the nearest bits of rope on that side not under the water were at least fifteen feet from the tree. He'd have to work his way out on the high side, then reach across—

But—no. Instead, the rope man slid down, took a deep breath, and, hooking one leg through a gap between planks, allowed his upper body to sink into the muddy water.

"He can tie that underwater? Upside down?"

"Can't you?"

"It's been more than thirty years since I was a Scout," he said. "I couldn't remember how to tie that knot in an air-conditioned lecture room with all day to practice it. If you want a nice clove hitch or a bowline, I'm your man."

She laughed. He enjoyed the sound of it. Been too long since he had made a beautiful and smart woman laugh. Especially one who hadn't tried to kill him several times, like Elsa and Rosita both had . . .

A few seconds later, the rope man emerged from the water and clambered up into the tree. He tied the fourth and final line then worked his way back toward the shore, uncoiling the rolls behind him.

A second man, bearing a machete, climbed past the rope man and into the branches.

Meanwhile, behind Indy and Marie, Batiste was fifteen feet up a large hardwood tree fifty or sixty feet back from the fallen bridge anchor, hammering spikes into the wood. Below him on the ground, Mac stood talking to one of the other men.

Mac caught Indy's gaze and sauntered over.

"D'you see the little contraption they have?"

"I did." Indy said. "Clever device. A kind of ratchet and triple-pulley system, see, there? Not very large, but mechanically efficient. One estimates how much slack there is going to be. A loop is tied into the rope a way along, where they figure it will be made most effectively taut, and the rope is run into the pulleys. The ratchet is tied to the tree, and the loop is cranked toward it until they can snag it over one of those spikes, which are a foot long each. This is done with all four of the ropes, and the ends of each are wrapped around more spikes for added security. Batiste says it won't be quite as strong as the original, but it will be more than enough to allow our party to cross the river."

"And the guy with the machete is there to cut away any branches that might tangle and keep the bridge from being raised," Mac said.

"Precisely. It will take a while to tighten all the ropes. Once the first line is pulled taut, the others have to be adjusted properly."

Mac nodded, though he looked bored. "Fascinating, right. Anyway,

Batiste says we should be able to leave in an hour or so.”

Mac headed back to the tree where Batiste continued to drive spikes into the thick trunk.

“So, you were a Boy Scout?”

He looked at Marie. “Yeah. In Utah.” He took off his hat and wiped the sweat from his forehead. He smiled at the hat.

“You remembered something amusing,” she said.

“This hat,” he said, as he put it back on. “It was a . . . gift from somebody I met in the Boy Scouts. Sort of.”

She raised an eyebrow, so Indy told her the story.

She listened, laughing in all the right places, looking grave as she considered the plight of a young teenager running from possible death, falling into a nest of snakes, and even a lion’s cage.

“Already an adventurer as a teenager?”

“My father is a retired professor of medieval history,” Indy said. “And something of an authority on . . . religious artifacts. How I got interested in archaeology and history.”

He didn’t mention that his father was alive after being fatally shot only because he had drunk water from what was the Holy Grail . . .

“What happened to it? Coronado’s Cross?”

He grinned. “Took me until 1938 to find it and get it again,” he said. “Now it’s in a museum where it belongs.”

“Not a man easily deterred, are you?”

“Not once I’ve made up my mind to do something, no.” He smiled at her.

She smiled back. How lovely that was.

“And what about you, Marie? How does a nice girl with a degree in history and comparative religion wind up in the jungle with a creaky old archaeologist looking for a hidden treasure?”

“Not so old and creaky,” she said.

He felt his heart beat faster.

“And you asked me to go, remember?”

“Speaking a little more broadly than that?”

She paused a moment, as if reflecting on her answer. “My mother was a mambo. She was a doctor of traditional medicine in her village as a young woman. She hungered for knowledge. She managed to find her way to Cuba in the mid-1920s, and to a most progressive medical school. The place was destroyed in a hurricane in ’28 or ’29, but not before she learned enough to become a doctor of Western medicine, too. She came home and started a clinic. She had hoped I would follow in her footsteps and also become a doctor. She was teaching me

how, along with other things.

"That was why I went to the United States, to eventually go to medical school. But my mother died in 1939—a fire, the clinic burned down. I had to come home, to sort things out. And then there was the war . . ."

She shook her head. "*C'est la vie*," she said.

Such is life. But trust the French to make it sound so much more profound.

Indy was still basking in the warmth of that not-so-old-and-creaky comment. Hope springs eternal . . .

There came a *grinch!* noise, and he looked up to see one of the new ropes connected to the old bridge stretching tighter as Batiste cranked on the handle of the ratchet Mac had mentioned. The man in the downed tree over the water was carefully hacking away at small branches in the crown to free the bridge from the tree's grasp as the rope grew more taut.

"Ever think about going back? To the States? The war won't last forever. Another couple of years, it will probably be over."

"I have considered it. But I have responsibilities here now. I know enough to treat many of my mother's patients—with either Western medicines or our own. And there are other things that require my attention. If the war goes on for another few years and then I must leave for four or five more past that? It would not seem to be in the cards. But—who can say what the future will bring."

They smiled again.

The bridge was now clear of the water on the right side, not by much, but a few feet, and Batiste was starting to tighten the lower rope on the opposite side. They'd be leaving soon. Maybe they could get back to this conversation later. Indy hoped so. He really liked Marie. He definitely wanted to get to know her better.

Suzuki said, "The natives have managed to repair an old bridge that spans the stream ahead of us. According to our scouts, there is no other way across this stream—it is deep and beset with a strong current."

"So we shall have to follow them over the bridge," Yamada said.

"Yes. But once on the other side, if we cut the ropes . . . ?"

Yamada nodded. Yes. That would greatly slow Gruber's pursuit, if not stopping it altogether. Especially if the supports were not entirely parted, but only weakened enough so that they would give way once a load was put upon them. It was an amusing and gratifying thought to envision Gruber and his men tumbling into the raging waters . . .

It did not happen that way, though.

When, an hour after their quarry had crossed the repaired bridge, Yamada and his men arrived there, they beheld an incredible sight:

There were two men across the river. Well. Not men, Yamada knew, but *things*. Each of them had, with its teeth, attacked the bridge support ropes.

They were hunched over the cables.

Chewing . . .

Suzuki said, "Shoot them!"

"No!" Yamada counter-ordered. "The noise will reveal us! Besides, it is too late, look!"

As they watched, the rope on the right parted and the bridge canted vertically that way. A few seconds later, the other rope snapped, and wooden planking fell into the water. It drifted downstream, still attached on Yamada's side of the river, fluttering in the water like a flag in a hard wind.

The two things stood and, without looking back, shambled off into the forest.

Yamada frowned. "The attackers at the village. Like the one that killed our soldier." He paused a beat. "I do not like this." He paused again. "Do we have a good swimmer?"

All of the men stepped forward.

Of course.

"The strongest man will carry a rope across and we will use it as a dragline," Suzuki said.

Yamada shrugged. They would get wet. There were worse things.

Some of which he had just seen chew through a rope.

Another time, Yamada would have been intrigued enough to chase down and collect one of these man-creatures, to see what made him tick. But the mission was too important.

Gruber listened to the report the scout offered. There had been a bridge, but it had been cut on the other side of the river. There was a fresh rope spanning the crossing, a foot above the water. Though he had not seen it, the scout reckoned that Jones and McHale's party had crossed via the bridge, which had been repaired on the west side of the river, and then felled it behind them, requiring that the Japanese devise other means to cross.

"That would only make sense if they knew they were being

followed," Gruber said.

"Perhaps they spotted the Japanese."

Gruber nodded. "Well. Nice of them to leave it for us," he said.

"Pragmatic," Schaefer said. "The Japanese no doubt intend to use it again when they come back this way. We shall probably see other such lines."

"Point taken, Captain."

Once they arrived at the crossing, Schaefer ordered one of his men to inchworm his way across the river. If the Japanese had done it, they certainly could.

The soldier did so, his body flagging downstream as he slid his hands along the rope, left, then right, then left. It took him only a few minutes to achieve the far shore.

"Not so bad," Gruber said. "I'll go next."

"You have gloves?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Best you wear them. The hemp will be rough on your hands."

"I am not made of sugar, Captain. I believe I can manage it."

Halfway across, Gruber wished he had taken Schaefer's advice, for the wet rope was harsh against his fingers and palms, and the pull of the water was strong enough so that it was not easy work to support one's weight with one hand while the other slid forward. Nonetheless, he managed to make it at the cost of a small blister on his left palm, no more. Once there, he stood and sluiced off as much water as he could. Being wet in the jungle was uncomfortable, but hardly unusual. One had to get used to it.

Schaefer crossed next, and then the rest of the men. The last man to cross was Heinrich Wagner, the doubting Thomas private. He was but a third of the way along when another of the men said, "Gott!" and pointed upstream.

Gruber turned to see, and beheld a log as big around as a man and thrice the length, with several broken, jagged-end branches jutting from the trunk, floating toward the crosser at a good rate.

"*Schnell, schnell!*" somebody yelled. "Heinrich, go back, go back, hurry, go back!"

But Wagner thought he could make it. He began moving his hands faster—

The log looked like it would miss him—

But—no. The log twisted, just a bit, just enough so that it hooked a branch under the rope. That slowed the front end almost to a stop, but the tail end came around—

—and slammed into Wagner, rolling over the top of the rope where his weight pulled the line below the surface. The log hit him on the head—

The scream he tried to get out turned into a gurgle and he lost his grip on the rope and sank.

The rope stretched . . . but held. The log rolled and floated on.

There was no sign of Wagner.

Soldiers ran along the bank but were stopped by a tangle of brush a few meters downstream. They cursed and attacked the brush with machetes, but Gruber knew that Heinrich was almost certainly drowned, if the impact had not been enough to fracture his skull.

He looked at Schäefer and shook his head. “He is a dead man.”

Schäefer nodded. “Yah.”

“He died for the glory of the Third Reich,” Gruber said. “Our report will reflect that. But we must move on.”

Schäefer nodded again. He didn’t like leaving one of his men floating down a stream in this godforsaken jungle, but dead was dead, and he had his orders. The mission was all that mattered, even if all of them died for it. *So ist Lieben*—such is life.

## FIFTEEN

BOUKMAN SMOKED the sacred herb and mushroom blend in his pipe, which had been carved from the thighbone of a long-dead bokor. The smoke, pungent and acrid and potent enough to drop flying insects in the small hut, shrouded his head and hung low, no breeze to stir it as the power of it suffused his mouth and nose and lungs, the drogue bringing to him the state called *pensée fraîche*, cool thought.

Boukman had been there many times, wreathed in the magic smoke that allowed him to focus his energies so that he could use the permissions granted him by the loa who rode him. When he was properly prepared, when he was in accord with all ways, he could, albeit in a smaller manner, go forth like the loa themselves and find his own horse, could mount it and ride.

Such trips were hard—they took much from him—but they offered great gains, as well.

The patterns of manic geometry strobbed across his vision, overlaying the inside of the hut with intricate grids—lines, whorls, the structure of everything made into blueprints designed by the gods, the order of things to the smallest detail, expanded large enough to behold.

Colors sparked along the periphery of his vision, flashes of primary red or blue or even black light, which was not the same as darkness.

Almost there . . .

The sense of weightlessness came over him; his body grew light, lighter than a feather, and it became less than a wisp, less than the smoke around him. He became *âme*, spirit, and was able to rise, up, through the smoky air, through the thatched room, up, up, above the trees and into the sky . . .

It took effort to keep himself focused. A lesser mage who took the sacred smoke might, as the smoke itself did, dissipate, lose himself, and leave nothing but a fleshy shell behind as he achieved the air, scattering to the winds like dust, never to return. In such a case, his body would breathe; its heart would beat; as long as somebody fed it and cared for it, it would live, but there would be no one home. It would be prey to wandering loa, or some bokor like Boukman, who had the power to stay collected and to move with intent.

Boukman floated above the jungle. He listened and he looked, and there, miles away, was a slender thread of white light, shining up from

the forest like a thin beam, reaching to Heaven . . .

Boukman moved toward the thread. He flew faster than a bird until he arrived at the light, and then he rode it down, like a man sliding along a pole, shooting toward the ground and the source of that light, faster and faster, so that when he arrived he would be unstoppable . . .

Indy was talking to Marie as they took a break. Ahead, the trail was narrowing, and soon it would become too small for a man to walk, Batiste had told them. They needed to drink water, for the work of cutting their way through a jungle was about to begin.

Marie smiled at Indy. "Did the Boy Scouts have a vine-slashing merit badge?"

He grinned at her in return. "Not as such. Not a lot of vines in Utah, though we did whack at sagebrush and cactus now and then."

Her smile vanished. Her eyes rolled back, showing the whites, and she moaned. She toppled backward off the stump upon which they were perched.

Indy grabbed her as she fell. She felt like rubber under his hands, as if her bones had vanished. "Marie!"

Batiste heard Indy yell. He ran and helped Indy lower her.

"What is it?"

Batiste shook his head, said, "What happened?"

"Nothing! I mean, she was talking and she just moaned and fell over!"

"She is being ridden," Batiste said.

"By whom?"

Batiste shook his head. "I don't know. The loa do not usually ride those with power unless they are invited. I have never seen this happen to her."

"What can we do?"

"There is nothing we can do. Watch her. Protect her body."

Indy stared at Marie. Her eyelids were partially open, but only the white was showing underneath her pupils.

Marie sat up. She looked around, not comprehending at first, Boukman knew, then she saw him.

"Bokor Boukman," she said.

Her voice was strong, no fear in it. That was good, he admired that. Of course, some of his blood, much thinned, flowed in her, so it was not altogether unexpected. She was a mambo, and her thread to

Heaven, while white, was thicker than many much more experienced.

She was a beautiful child. Her mother had been likewise a beauty. Unfortunately, her mother had also been a mambo of some power who had resisted him, and it had been with regret that he'd had to eliminate her. It was always a waste to destroy beauty, but sometimes it had to be done.

Marie had even features, smooth skin, thick and lovely hair. Very much a woman in her shape. In the flesh, he would be pleased to touch her, to feel the supple muscles and skin, but here in this realm, they were *âme*, and such sensations were pale compared with the real world. A pity.

Well, that could be remedied later.

He saw her understand what had happened.

"You are very powerful, Uncle Grand," she said. "More than I knew."

He shrugged. "More than anybody knows," he said. "You have grown since last I saw you. Now tell me, what of these *blan* with whom you travel? Why are they here?"

She said nothing, only watched him.

He smiled. Ah. Brave, the little one was. "Must I compel you?"

He saw her jaw muscles flex and her eyes narrow. She spoke a short phrase, low so that he could not hear, but he saw her lips move and knew it was a spell of power she invoked. A glowing shield began to form about her, like green glass with the sunlight glinting from it.

Boukman laughed. He pointed his right hand's fingers skyward and closed them into a fist.

Marie's shield made a noise like a nail being pried from wet wood, and vanished. There came a whiff of brimstone burning. "Child, child, you have heart, but where is your mind? You cannot resist me."

"I can try."

He laughed again. Such spirit was to be admired. She knew she had no chance against him, none, but even so she stood defiant. Just as her mother had. He liked her for that. Not that liking her would slow what he was going to do, of course.

He opened his fist, waved both hands, said a Word of Power granted him by The Little Girl that was halfway between a hiss and a curse.

Her eyes went wide as she felt the grip of giant, invisible hands. They pulled her arms up, so they jutted straight out from her body, pulled her feet apart so that her legs were spread shoulder-width apart, and lifted her into the air, a foot, two feet, three . . .

She struggled against the geas, but to no avail. She was a fly in ice, unable to move more than a shiver.

He walked to where she floated and gestured. She settled back to the earth, and at more than six and a half feet tall, Boukman looked down at her. "My *zombis* are in the jungle. I can keep you here, away from your body and have them kill the white men, you know I can. Tell me."

"No. You could have killed us before now, if that was your wish. That you have not? Means you do not wish it. The gods might frown upon it."

He shook his head. Ah, smart, too. Certainly he had uses for women with beauty, power, and cleverness. She would be too strong to be a *zombi*, but there were other ways to serve.

"Tell me. I can make you suffer."

She tried to shrug, couldn't quite manage it.

"They came here for something," he prompted. "It concerns me, I know this. A thing of power. Hidden somehow, from my sight."

"And if you kill them, you will certainly never find it."

"You think not? My servants are tireless. They can search forever."

"It might take them forever to find it. You don't have that long, Uncle. If it was open to your gaze, you would have known about it and uncovered it long ago."

He shook his head. Too smart for her own good.

He reached out, stroked the side of her face with the tip of his forefinger.

Smoke rose from the line he traced across her cheek.

She swallowed her yelp of pain. It came out no more than a grunt.

"Very well, my little niece. You are right—the gods are not ready for me to know, so I will allow your *imen blan* to live another day. They will lead me to that which I must have. They will die when I need them to die."

"I will warn them against you," she said.

"It would not do any good, *ma petite*, they are white men, they have no power, and yours is not sufficient to protect them. Besides, you won't warn them."

"I will!"

"No, you will not. Because you will not remember any of this. Go back to your self, child. And awaken in wonder as to where you have been . . ."

He gestured at her, spoke another Word.

Her eyes grew wide.

Boukman reached out, took hold of her thread leading skyward, and pulled. His spectral body flew up like the ghost of a monkey ascending

to Heaven.

More and more interesting, this. He had not been so intrigued in a score of years, he decided. Perhaps not in two score.

As he flew above the jungle, his *âme* smiled to itself again.

He would return to his body. And there would be those others in the jungle with whom he must deal. Perhaps there was something to be gained from them, as well. Every small bit gathered was useful.

Marie took a shuddering and deep breath, sat up, and her pupils rolled down, to behold Indy.

He held one hand behind her back, steadyng her. “Are you okay?”

She nodded. “Yes.”

“What happened? Where’d you go?”

Behind him, Mac leaned in, along with Batiste.

She shook her head slowly. “I—I don’t remember,” she said.

Batiste said something in that soft and smooth language of his.

Indy caught but one word of it: “Boukman?”

“It would seem so. I do not recall the meeting, but there is no one else who is powerful enough to ride me without my leave. And a loa would ask.”

“He would have wanted to know about you,” Batiste said. He nodded at Indy and Mac.

Indy looked at Marie again. There was a red mark on her cheek. It looked like a burn.

“I do not think I would have told him anything,” she said. “But I cannot know for sure.”

“What’s to tell?” Mac asked.

She shrugged. “Not much. But with Boukman, any information adds to his power.”

“So we should be worried,” Indy said.

“Yes, though not so much just yet,” she said. “If he had wanted us dead or taken, he would have already had it done—he has *zombis* in the jungle, you may be certain of that. He wants something from us, and I think he doesn’t know exactly what it is. He is waiting to see what we do. After we find the artifact, that will be the time of greatest danger.”

“Maybe they won’t be able to get across the river?” Mac said.

“Oh, they can. Tumbling downstream for a mile means nothing to them. They are already dead.”

“Well . . . swell,” Indy said. “Never a dull moment.”

## SIXTEEN

SUZUKI SAID, "One of our scouts is missing."

"Missing?"

"*Hai*, Yamada-san. He was due to report back an hour ago."

"Perhaps his watch stopped."

Suzuki look to see if Yamada was jesting, which was the case, though Yamada did not grin to give it away.

He shook his head. "My men can tell time well enough from the sunlight to know when they are due back."

Yamada nodded. The man could have had an accident, of course. This jungle was full of places to trip and fall and wind up with a broken leg or worse. He could have tumbled into a river and been swept away. Quicksand, perhaps. Dangers everywhere.

Well. That was the nature of a military unit. One had to scout the terrain and enemies. And some losses were to be expected, whether by accident or by enemy intent.

Maybe the Germans, though if they thought they were still hidden, probably not. They wouldn't want to do anything to cause Yamada's crew to be more alert—and a missing man would certainly be cause for concern.

Before he had seen that creature with the blood dripping down its jaws crouched over one of the imperial army's finest men, he might have been more apt to believe in an accident, but not now. The scout wasn't going to be coming back if one of those things had gotten him.

"I will pair the men from now on," Suzuki said.

That horse was out of the barn and closing the door wouldn't help him, but Suzuki was right—it might help the others.

Maybe.

"One of our men is gone," Schäfer said.

Gruber stared at him. "Gone, what do you mean, 'gone'?"

"I mean he is not with us and cannot be located."

"Who?"

"Private Grün."

"Are you sure? How did it happen?"

"He was in the group bringing up the rear. He apparently stepped

off the trail to answer a call of nature. Private Schinken waited. When, after a few moments, Grün did not return, Schinken went looking. He did not find him. He marked the spot, and two more of our men went back to look. No sign of the man."

"*Scheisse!*"

"My sentiments, as well."

"The Japanese, do you think?"

"No. Our forward scouts would have certainly seen them heading back along the trail."

"Then what happened?"

"Perhaps there are larger animals than we know about in these woods."

"Surely there would have been evidence of an animal attack?"

"I do not know what to tell you, Colonel Doktor. He is gone, and it is as if he vanished into the air."

"Pair the men," Gruber said. "Nobody goes anywhere alone, even to answer calls of nature."

"Already done," the captain said.

"I do not like this."

"Nor do I, but done is done. Perhaps he wandered too far, got lost, and he will find his way back to the trail eventually and catch up with us."

"Do you think so?"

"Not really."

Gruber sighed. First, they had lost a man to the river. And now this. Turning ugly, this mission.

Ah, well. That had always been a possibility, hadn't it? They would just have to continue on as best they could, and be more vigilant. They were a crack unit of the German army, men who could shoot a fly off a wall at ten paces or slice a man into bloody ribbons with a pocketknife—there ought not to be anything or anybody in this forest who could stop them from their goal. Nor would he allow that.

"We're supposed to climb down that?" Mac said.

"Unless you can wave your arms hard enough to fly over it," Marie said.

Indy looked at the gorge. It was both steep and deep, easily eighty feet of dirt and rock embankment on this side, slightly less on the opposite side. Yeah. He had climbed worse.

Mac said, "Why isn't there a river at the bottom?"

"There is," Batiste said. "But there are clefts in the rock—you see? And the river is below, in a natural tunnel through the stone under the ground. Even when it rains, the water does not rise to fill the gorge, but is drained into the river beneath the earth."

Indy nodded.

Batiste said, "We will anchor ropes here and climb down. If we move slowly and with care, it will not be so bad."

Indy looked at Marie.

"Do not worry about me," she said. "I have been climbing trees and ropes since I was a girl."

"Well, I haven't done much of that since my last trip to the Schweizer Alpen, in '34," Mac said. "I hope I haven't forgotten how."

Indy looked at Mac. "The Swiss Alps in '34? Dufourspitze? That was you?"

Mac grinned.

Marie looked blank.

Indy said, "Leonardo da Vinci had another set of mirror-writing notebooks that disappeared after he died. The story was, somehow those writings wound up in the hands of thieves, who eventually hid them somewhere between Italy and Switzerland. The thieves had a falling-out, some were killed, others arrested and executed, and the location supposedly died with them."

"But in 1934, these notebooks showed up in the British Museum. Found in a cave on the Dufourspitze—so the provenance the English offered said." He looked at Mac.

"Modesty forbids," he said, holding his hands palms up.

"Since when did *you* develop any modesty?" Indy shook his head. "The Italians were not happy about those notebooks winding up in British hands."

"And since when are the Italians ever happy? Besides, they had so many of the great man's writings already and wouldn't share them. It was only fair. Leonardo belongs to the world, not il duce Mussolini."

"Hey, I'm not arguing with you—"

"Messieurs," Batiste said, "we would probably be wise to cross the ravine while the daylight is still strong."

The descent wasn't so bad when you had a rope down which you could rappel. It was hard work in the heat and humidity, but the angle wasn't so steep that it ever approached vertical, so you weren't ever just hanging there.

Mac had a bad moment halfway down when something slid under

his boot and he nearly lost the rope. He cursed, but managed to stop himself after a couple of feet.

"You okay?" Indy asked.

"Peachy," Mac said. He didn't sound peachy, though.

Marie was as good a climber as she claimed.

Indy had done enough of this kind of work that he wasn't particularly worried, but after Mac's slip, he paid more attention to his footing.

It took only a few minutes for most of them to reach the bottom of the ravine. Indy saw the fissure in the rock at the bottom before he reached it—the gap was probably three feet on average, narrower here, wider there, and had been there long enough so that the edges of the split had been smoothed by time and weather. He could also hear the subterranean river rushing below the crack in the earth. It was loud—the sound channeled up through the fissure from the enclosure was full of echoes.

Indy peered into the gap. The sunlight from above was just enough to get a glimpse of the roiling water about thirty feet down.

"Careful you do not fall in," Batiste said. "The Fleuve Caché—the Hidden River—does not surface until she reaches the sea, and there she tumbles down a high cliff into a rocky cove. It is most impressive to see the waterfall from a boat offshore. Much foam and spew, it fills the air with rainbows and mist. You would almost certainly be drowned long before you got there, but if you survived the swim and the tide was out, you would be dashed to death on the rocks."

Indy took a step back from the edge.

The bearers were already tossing the supplies over a narrowing of the cleft, an easy step for an adult, and slender enough so that it wouldn't cost you a fall into the river if you slipped.

Up top, one of the bearers undid two of the three ropes, rolled them up, and clambered down the remaining line.

"We will leave a rope for our return," Batiste said.

"Only one?" Indy said.

Batiste shrugged. "We may need the others between here and where we are going." He looked up the easier slope ahead of them. "The forest thickens above us, and we will have to hack our way through for at least another half kilometer."

"And after that?" Mac asked.

Batiste shrugged again. "I cannot say for sure. I have never gone past that myself. I have only the accounts of others. There is a small grassland, supposedly. More streams, other ravines, a few hills. If we get past those, finally the place we seek."

"Seems like somebody went to a lot of trouble to take the relic there," Indy said.

Batiste said, "Oui. The story my father's grandfather told him said that of those who went, a score of men, only one returned to speak of it. The others died on the trip, or once they were there."

"Accidents?"

"The lone survivor would not speak to this. When asked, he would cross himself and go silent, so the story goes."

*Just keeps getting better,* Indy thought.

Boukman looked at the two captives, the German and the Japanese. He would question them and find out what they knew. The German would be easy—he spoke that language, along with a score of others: Spanish, French, Portuguese, English, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, a little Russian, and several Caribbean dialects. Over nearly two hundred years, he had learned a lot of tongues. Unfortunately, he had little opportunity to avail himself of languages from most of Asia, so he had no Chinese, Japanese, or Hindi. But that was not such an impediment—there were many among the loa who knew human speech in all its forms, and Boukman could petition one on such a small matter at little cost.

The two men were bound and blindfolded, sitting there against the outside wall of his hut, and Boukman nodded at two of his servants and pointed at the German. "That one."

The two Children of the Potion moved. They dragged the German to his feet, removed his blindfold, and held him so that he faced Boukman.

"We must talk," he said in German.

"I will tell you nothing!" the German said.

Boukman smiled. "You are a soldier, and a brave man, but that does not matter. You cannot resist my questions."

"Torture?"

"I would not waste my time." He nodded.

Two more of the Children approached, one of them bearing a vial of the potion. He would have to make some more of it, soon; he was running low.

The German was strong and tried to fight them, but in the end he was forced to swallow enough of the fluid. It was only a matter of minutes after that before he belonged to Boukman. The Japanese soldier would enjoy the same fate, and when he was done with them here, he would send them back out to spy upon their former fellows.

They would be possessed, serving as Boukman's cat's paws until they died the True Death. And if he felt like it, they would be his beyond that . . .

Boukman smiled at that thought. It must be terrifying to see a comrade shamble into view and realize he was no longer anything like the man you had known.

Once the elixir took him, the German grew slack in the grips of the others. His face relaxed, his eyes dulled. Who he had been sank deep under the tide of the drug and all but drowned.

Boukman knew the signs well. He had been causing them for nearly two centuries. He waved the others away.

The new slave stood there, swaying slightly, waiting for his master's voice.

"Now, tell me—what are the Germans doing in my country?"

Like a schoolboy reciting lessons by rote, the German told him everything he knew about that subject. Not that much, but all that he had.

Boukman listened. Ah. Most interesting. He did not see how it really concerned him directly—he already had the secret to the potion; he doubted that an African version, which might require plants and other ingredients from that far continent, could serve him any better. But he would see. Knowledge was power. The more you knew, the more powerful you could become.

He would question the other soldier and see what his group was doing—

On a hunch—the Germans and Japanese were allies in this current war—he said, "Do you speak Japanese?"

"Yes," the German said.

Boukman smiled again. He would not even have to call upon the loa, making it even easier.

"Bring the other one," he said.

Gruber looked down the side of the incline. Steep, but not insurmountable. The opposite side was even less of a grade. And the archaeologists had left a rope in place. Gruber had a man test it, to make certain it wasn't rigged to break or let go.

"Post a guard," he told the captain. "To make certain nobody fools with the rope as we descend. Two men."

Schäefer nodded. "Of course."

It would be a nasty fall if the rope were to part as one descended, and while Gruber didn't mind losing men if it was necessary, it ought

not to happen from inattention. "It will be dark soon," Gruber said. "Have the scouts find a suitable site for camp. I do not think we wish to try to travel in this jungle after dark."

Schäfer nodded.

Yamada had enough room to sit up comfortably in his small tent, in the kneeling butt-on-heels position called *seiza*. Europeans and Americans used chairs, seldom the floor, but such a position was traditional in Japan, save for the very elderly or injured. In such a pose, a samurai could draw and cut with his sword, drink sake, or practice *shodo*—calligraphy—as he now did.

As with the tea ceremony or kendo, there were proper ways of doing things. Yamada had unrolled his tools—the brush, stone, ink stick, and wiping rag—from a thin sheet of chamois and laid them out on the edge of the sleeping mat. He poured a small amount of water into the stone's well. He preferred a rectangular one over a round one, and his, lovingly made by an expert craftsman, was of excellent quality for a travel stone.

The grinding area was wide enough to rub the ink stick in an oval pattern in and out of the water, which was also his preference, and the resulting ink was black and of the right consistency; it did not stick to the stone. This was a simple activity but had to be done mindfully. He had seldom missed a day doing it in thirty years.

Once the ink was prepared and the paper unrolled and ready, the brush was selected. Some liked the soft goat's hair, some the harder bristles of wolf's hair—which was rarely made from wolves, but usually horse or weasel, sometimes rabbit—but Yamada like those with mixed hairs, for his expertise was enough to justify them. He had but two of these with him, and he took great care to make sure they were clean and dry before he clipped them into the special container that protected the bristles from contacting anything once they were encased. Once a brush was worn out, it was proper to bury it, with a prayer of respect for what it had taught you. The two he had should last until long after he was home, but he was careful with them. A day without calligraphy seemed unthinkable.

Ready, he dipped his brush, lifted it, and approached the waiting paper.

There were times when Yamada worked on specific *kanji* to hone his technique—cursive dragon strokes or complex symbols to test his abilities. Of late, he had spent less time on the complex and more on allowing whatever feeling welled within him to take control.

Thus it was this evening. He allowed his mind to go quiet, and his

hand took a life of its own and began to draw *bu*, the martial strokes that evoked a warrior with a long battleax stepping forward. Quickly he completed the *kanji* and moved down to begin *shi*, a simple cross-with-a-platform, representing a person—and more, one who was a samurai. His hand flowed naturally down into *do*. This was a highly stylized human head—there the eye, there the hair—and beneath it, a foot to indicate movement. *Do* was the Way, which was embodied by someone moving.

### *Bu-shi-do*, the Way of the Warrior.

He leaned back, took a deep, slow breath, released it, and beheld his drawing. Yes. The smallest imperfection in the first character, just on the left stroke, a single, errant hair, was not enough to mar the power of the three symbols taken together, and was, in fact, a good sign—that perfection was desired but not always necessary. A fine effort, he knew. Concise, strong, powerful, flowing—which was the essence of the Warrior’s Way.

Yamada smiled. Yes.

It was time to clean the stone and brushes. He was done. The preparation took much longer than the act, and that was also part of the Way.

In the morning, when the ink was dry on his rice paper, he would roll it up and put it into his pack. With luck, he would bring it and other of his better writings home, to install in his private room. Those drawings he had made each day that were unworthy to keep, he burned at the first opportunity.

Once the stone and brush were pristine again, he put them aside to dry. He extinguished his typhoon candle. Then he lay upon his bedding and began to compose his daily haiku. A samurai was a man of culture—he was a warrior who could take a man’s head, satisfy a woman, create art and poetry, and display total loyalty to his lord, his *daimyo*. There had been men who were fierce fighters but could evoke a wren landing on a reed with a few brushstrokes as adeptly as a dedicated artist. That was the goal of a samurai—to be a man of many talents.

Tonight, he thought, he would do a poem about the moon. Not the fuzzy one that hung over the muggy lands so far away from home, but the one that shined like a Chinese bowl in the skies behind Mount Fuji on a clear autumn day.

The buzzing of the mosquitoes became a background drone as he considered his verse. The moon. Not as light, too easy, but as perhaps a painting on the curtain of the sky . . . ?

## SEVENTEEN

“WE HAVE MADE good progress,” Batiste said.

The morning was hardly what one would call “cool” as the sun’s early light tried to sneak down through the thick green canopy and mostly failed to do so, but it was the least hot part of the day. *Take what you can get*, Indy thought.

“I think we might be able to attain our destination, *laisser d’un Dieu*, by tomorrow night, or the morning following.”

“God allowing,” Marie said in English, echoing Batiste’s acknowledgment.

“What’s for breakfast?” Mac asked. He rubbed at his belly. “I always seem to lose far too much weight on these adventures.”

“Hard to see that,” Indy allowed. “You look like you could skip a week’s worth of meals and not suffer.”

“You are a cruel, cruel man, Dr. Jones, to insult me thus.”

Both men grinned.

Marie said, “We have fruit, coconut milk, nuts, hard biscuits, cold coffee.”

“What? No steak, eggs, sausage, and kippers? No tea? What kind of establishment are you running here, madam? Can’t you at least send the concierge out for *The Times*? ”

She smiled at Mac. “We could bake bread, but we would need to make a fire and let it burn down to coals, and perhaps our time would be better spent moving before the day warms up.”

“Ah, well. I suppose rabbit food is better than nothing.”

One of Batiste’s men passed around pieces of fruit—bananas, melons, chunks of coconut, and a canteen of coconut milk with bamboo cups. There was some thick, and unheated, tepid coffee, welcome enough even so. Indy chewed on a handful of nuts that tasted like cashews but looked like large peanuts, not bad. He washed the food down with the coconut milk, which was warm, but wet enough. And the coffee.

Marie, sitting next to him, smiled, and he loved the way it looked on her.

“I find it curious,” she said. “You could be a tenured professor in a university, living a comfortable and easy life teaching students. Or in a governmental building in Washington, far from the rigors of war,

shuffling papers, and no one would think less of you for it. And yet, you are in the war, in the field, and for relaxation you come to our islands and slog your way through a daunting, dangerous jungle, to collect and protect an artifact that, if you succeed, will wind up in a museum, viewed by people who will not know, or care, who collected it, nor how hard the doing of it was.”

“Well, everybody has to be someplace,” Indy said.

She reached out and touched his hand with her fingertips. “You make light of your calling. But it is not a small matter. Love and dedication are powerful things. A man who knows who he is and thus what to do in his life is a rare and valuable thing. A treasure of a different kind.”

She pulled her hand away and nodded at him.

The sensation of her fingers on his hand lingered, evoking a warmth unlike that of the jungle around them. Lord, another smart and insightful woman. Indy could feel that attraction. In their own way, those kinds of women were scarier than a room full of Nazis with guns. All the Nazis could do was *kill* you—women could do so much more . . .

Two more hours into their journey—it was not really a walk, but a stop-and-start affair involving a fair amount of work with flashing machetes to clear a path, move the cut brush, and then proceed to the next curtain of vines or brambles. Every fifteen or twenty minutes, the men leading would switch places so they could sharpen their blades and relax their tired arms and shoulders. Indy had taken his turns at the front and, after a few minutes’ slashing at the growth, had much more appreciation for the men who were doing most of the cutting. This was hard work.

Two hours, and perhaps five hundred yards’ progress—that much only because a couple of old-growth hardwood trees had fallen sometime in the last few years and provided wooden walkways through the underbrush. Even so, some of the creepers and fast-growing brush had started to reclaim the fallen giants, and those had to be cleared. A few more years in the tropical clime and those huge trees would be rotted and gone, the jungle leaving little sign they had ever been. A militant greenery, this.

At one point, when Mac was coming up to take a turn, they spotted something by their feet:

“Good Lord, look at that! Bloody spider is the size of a small dog!”

Indy shook his head. Maybe not quite that big, but he’d seen smaller rats. “Brown tarantula,” he said. “Got to be almost a foot across. I’ve

seen bigger ones, in the Amazon. The Goliaths there eat birds, when they can catch them, and they are bigger than these.”

Mac shuddered.

“Not dangerous to us,” Indy said. “Bite’s no worse than a couple of wasp stings. And if you pick one up and drop it? It will splash like an egg. Fragile things, which is why they don’t climb much.”

“I’m sorry, but a spider that can span a serving platter is more than I want sharing my tent, thank you.”

“Wimp,” Indy said.

“Oh, look—a snake—”

Indy jumped. “*Where!?*”

Mac laughed. “Now who’s the wimp, eh?”

“Not funny, Mac.”

“Oh, but it is!”

Indy dropped back from his stint of chopping and slashing, letting Mac take his place. Snake jokes were definitely not funny. He looked at the nice new red blisters on his hand, despite the leather work gloves. One of Batiste’s men appeared from behind them and came forward to hold a hurried conversation with their guide.

Batiste waved the others to stillness while he listened.

Marie drifted back to where Indy stood. “Hebert has seen men in the forest trailing us.”

“*Zombis?*”

“No. From his description, they are Asians. And they move like soldiers.”

Indy frowned. “Asian soldiers? Here? Why would they—ah . . .”

Marie nodded. “*Oui*. It would be a coincidence of great magnitude that they just happened to be in this jungle for any reason not connected to us. Especially since they are following us.”

Mac walked over, raised an eyebrow in question.

Indy told him what Marie had said.

“They are after the pearl,” Mac said.

“Maybe. Maybe they don’t know about the pearl and are tracking us to see what we are after,” Indy said.

“Doesn’t make sense, following us,” Mac said. “They would have had to trail us from the main island—no way they could hang about here for long without the locals spotting them. My sources for information about the Heart of Darkness were not particularly secret. Anybody with an archaeologist’s nose and a little money to grease the wheels might have sniffed it out.”

“Unless they’ve been watching us since Port-au-Prince,” Indy said.

"Remember what Marie told us about spies on Haiti?"

Marie said, "Yes. There are representatives of both the Allies and the Axis in the capital. Germans pretending to be Dutch, Japanese disguised as Chinese."

"Really?" Mac said. "I could see Germans passing for Dutch, but I would have thought the differences between Chinese and Japanese would be all too obvious."

"To a man as well traveled as yourself, perhaps. Here? Not too many opportunities to compare and contrast."

"Point taken," Mac allowed.

Batiste came to join them. "You heard?"

Marie nodded.

"Hebert saw only one man, but heard others moving in the bush. He also heard them speak at a far remove, and he did not know the language, but he said the voices had harsh, singsong tones."

Indy and Mac glanced at each other.

"Japs," they said together.

"What would they want with such an antiquity?" Marie asked.

"War has been running against them," Mac said. "Might buy a few new tanks with what the pearl would bring. And some of the high mucky-mucks in the Gestapo and SS are art collectors, too. They've looted scores of museums and private collections. Maybe the Japanese are taking lessons from the Krauts."

Indy shook his head. "That's a reach, Mac. Japanese hunters halfway around the world because *maybe* there's a big black pearl out in the jungle? Not the same as looting the Nanking museum."

Batiste looked puzzled.

"The Nazis want to show they are cultured," Mac said. "Demonstrate that the Third Reich has taste. As a result, they have stolen a raft of Western art. And caused many of Europe's most famous paintings and sculptures to be hidden away in barns and basements all over the Continent. The Japanese aren't averse to swiping artwork themselves, though I'm not sure they have quite the same motives as Jerry."

Indy wasn't buying this line. "Still doesn't scan. Assuming they got the same information you did, why follow us? Why not just go and collect it themselves?"

"Maybe they got to Haiti after we did? Maybe they just wanted somebody to blaze a trail for them. Or maybe they heard about the *zombis*. Could be they didn't get the same information. Who knows?"

"I don't like it," Indy said. "Something's not right about this. Maybe

we should go and collect ourselves one of these Japanese and discuss it with him.”

Batiste said, “Perhaps not the wisest action. The jungle is full of dangers, and that includes the undead. Does it really matter why they are here?”

“It matters,” Indy said. “But maybe not so much yet. Can your man find out more about them without being spotted?”

“Oui. This is our forest, we know its ways better than anybody from outside.”

“Good idea, mate,” Mac said. “If it turns out they are Japs out to collect the pearl, we can’t allow them to do so. If we know how many of them there are and where they are, it would be to our benefit. Perhaps we might trap them somehow, or at least sneak past them.”

“Or shoot them all down like diseased pigs,” Marie said.

Indy looked at her.

“A Japanese navy submarine sank a transport carrying five hundred of my countrymen to West Africa earlier this year,” she said. “Two of them were my cousins. We have little love for the Axis here.”

Indy wanted to grin but kept it in check. Smart. Beautiful. A voodoo priestess. And potentially lethal. What was not to like about her?

Batiste spoke to Hebert, a rapid, liquid, sibilant-filled speech, and the man nodded and moved back along their trail. Indy was looking at him when he stepped into the trees and vanished.

So. Awful terrain—woods, rivers, cliffs—a local ju-ju man who controlled a couple of varieties of *zombi*, who were either outright dead or close to it, and now Japanese soldiers skulking around the forest after them. Yeah. That seemed about par for the course.

What next?

A couple of hours later, he found out. Hebert returned, had another quick session with Batiste, then vanished into the jungle again.

Batiste collected Indy and Mac and Marie.

“There are more men in the forest. Tracking the Asians is a similar group, Europeans. Hebert heard them speak, and this language he has heard before. They are Germans.”

Indy just shook his head. Germans. Couldn’t seem to get away from those guys.

“What do we do?” Marie asked.

“Mac said it—they must think we know where the pearl is,” Indy replied. “And they *don’t*—otherwise, they wouldn’t be following us. Like you said about Boukman, we’re probably okay until we collect it. As soon as we do, it would be a good idea for us to leave them

wandering around in the jungle and go back to the big island.”

The rest of the day was largely a repeat of the first part—rivers, hills, ravines, nothing they hadn’t really seen before.

Another river had a rope they had to hand-overhand to cross.

More brush had to be cut, more blisters raised.

Hebert returned and reported that the Japanese were still trailing them.

“Maybe we should cut down the bridges and such,” Mac offered.

“We would just have to rebuild them,” Batiste said, “if we want to get home.”

Well, yes, there was that.

But the Japanese—if that’s who they truly were—stayed back, and through the heat of the long afternoon Indy and his party slashed and picked and climbed their way through the jungle.

As dusk approached, Batiste stopped the group. “Almost there,” he said. “Half an hour more, according to my man.”

“Thank goodness,” Mac said. “I confess I was beginning to get a bit winded.”

“I don’t believe that ‘goodness’ has much to do with it, monsieur,” Batiste said. “Not much at all.”

## **EIGHTEEN**

BOUKMAN FLEW, high above the earth. There, a few kilometers away, a thunderstorm flashed and grumbled, the light blinking on and off in the dark clouds. Below him, half a kilometer or more, the dark carpet of the jungle lay over the island, and the breakers lapped at the shore where the land ended and the sea began.

In the Other Realm, things had forms much like those they possessed in the everyday life—only the same rules did not always apply.

Boukman reached down with his feeling, sought, and found Marie, his great-grandniece. She had raised wards to protect herself against him. He could break them easily enough, but there was no need. He knew where she was, he knew that his slaves were in the woods, watching and waiting, it was all as it needed to be.

There was still a puzzle to it, though. He felt that there was something of great importance here, most great, and yet—he had not detected the kind of energy such a thing would ordinarily emit. People, animals, objects of power, they all produced signs revealing themselves. Even a modestly strong bokor would shine like a bonfire visible day and night. Little Marie glowed less so, more like a lamp in a dim room, the tendril of her connection to Heaven a thin, glimmering white ribbon. Over many years, Boukman had seen many such lights, from the sizzling electric primary colors of loa, to the softer, purer lights of holy men and women, to the malignant purple fires of truly wicked people and wicked places. And yet, upon this corner of this small island, there was nothing to be seen. Either that meant there was nothing here, which was a possibility he had to allow, or that some power greater than his own had shielded it from view.

Now, *that* would be something. There had been no power here greater than his for a long time. Once, long ago, on a ship far out to sea, he had beheld a spiritual fire passing, a pillar of roiling blue and orange flame that shot up into the heavens with an intensity he had never observed, not before, nor since. He had been afraid to approach that beacon. Whoever or whatever it had been, it had frightened him. He had known, on a deep and certain level, that had he made to touch that roiling column, he would have been sucked into it and blasted into the cosmos, torn loose from himself and this world to wander for eternity.

These days, maybe he would feel strong enough to peer more closely at such a vile and wondrous thing, but even as a young man he had not been completely stupid. Knowing when to stand or when to leave was how a man survived. The jungle's law was eat or be eaten, and he would have choked on that kind of power.

And yet, he somehow felt that whatever his niece was on to down on the island, whatever the two *blan* had come here to find, was as powerful as what had passed by on the sea more than a hundred years ago. Somehow, they would obtain it. And then, he would obtain them . . .

Spiritual travel had dangers; creatures that lived in the Other Realm, even a man of power had to avoid. Sometimes you had to risk these, for it was necessary. Sometimes, you should not.

There were other, safer ways to have a look at things without being there in person . . .

As he served the loa as a horse, so did his *zombis* serve Boukman. His *âme* could travel the Other Realm and imbue one of the True Risen with his own essence.

There was little risk involved in taking such a mount—*zombis* were durable. But there was no joy in riding a *zombi*. The senses were dulled—the sight dim, the hearing lessened, the feelings coarse. Food held no pleasure—roast pork and raw feces would smell and taste the same. There was no sex, no effects from liquor or drugs, no delights in the warmth of the sun on dead skin. When Boukman rode a *zombi*, however, the *zombi* was still a part of this world, at least on a gross physical level. Sometimes, that was necessary.

So it was that Boukman found and rode a woman six weeks dead, crouching in the forest and watching as little Marie and her *imen blan* arrived at their intended destination: an impossible clearing in the forest, kept that way by something not the least bit natural.

Even with the greatly reduced senses available to him, Boukman could feel the thrum of hidden power from inside his *zombi*'s form. Like a low fog, that energy did not extend much above the ground—he would never have felt it in either realm were it not close enough to touch. This was something of a surprise, even though he had known it must be so. A bokor of power beyond any he had ever known, far past his own considerable strength, had been here. That powerful mage had hidden something, and warded it with such a spell that even the ward itself was all but invisible—even to one such as Boukman.

Amazing. He would not have believed it were he not now feeling it.

This was like a bonfire to a lamp, the sun to the moon, and that the gods and loa had allowed him to come to it was a gift beyond any he could imagine.

They had sent the *imen blan* and his great-grandniece to collect it for him—they must have their reasons for doing it thus, and Boukman would respect those. Once it was collected—whatever it was—then he would harvest it. And that harvest would ripen soon, he felt.

He had a small army of his potioned ones and True Risen in the woods. They would stand ready, and wait.

But not, he felt, much longer . . .

Batiste and the bearers and Marie had all crossed themselves before they first stepped into the clearing, and Indy understood why. It wasn't lost on him that this place ought not to be here. That the jungle just stopped, as if cut off by a knife, and the ground was flat and lacking any plants, save for what looked and felt like thick gray-green moss underfoot. That seemed more than a little odd.

One *more* odd thing to join the party . . .

Mac said, "Could just be salted earth or somesuch. Some acid or alkaline substance in the dirt. Anybody happening upon the place might consider it a sign from the gods or the like, but I'm sure there's a perfectly natural explanation."

"You think?"

"Well, it would seem a reasonable thesis."

"Reasonable. Like, say . . . dead men walking?"

Mac wouldn't admit it, but Indy could see it felt creepy to him, too. "With any luck, we'll be gone soon enough," Mac said.

"I hope. I still plan to sleep with my revolver under my pillow." Pillow. Right. Should have had Mac's imaginary concierge fetch him one of those. A pillow. A hot bath. A nice snifter of Napoleon brandy . . .

Mac went along with the lame joke: "Careful you don't thrash around in a nightmare and blow your head off."

There was a certain whistling-past-the-graveyard feel to the banter, and Indy was too tired to pick it up again. He just nodded at Mac.

It was late dusk, near enough to dark so that any kind of search would be likely a waste of time, especially since there wasn't anything to see—just the clearing, no buildings, no burial mounds, no stacked-up stones for altars. No flashing neon arrows pointing to a spot, saying *Here it is!* In the fast-fading daylight, the ground could have passed for a carpeted floor, flat, maybe half an acre. Nothing to see.

They were all exhausted anyhow, and fresh eyes in the morning made more sense. They lit lamps, started a fire, and broke out food. This was a big part of their goal, to arrive here, and they had managed

that much. Better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick. Now all they had to do was find an artifact hidden for a century and a half, get past a bunch of Nips, Nazis, and walking dead, catch a boat to Haiti, and then a plane for home. That was all. No problem, hey . . . ?

As he had the night before, Indy set up his own sleep shelter. There were some larger tarps, to protect the supplies, but the sleeping tents were small, three-sided and floored sheets of stitched-together green canvas, barely tall enough to sit up in. There were two sets of door flaps, mesh and canvas, each of which could be zippered shut. If it was cold or raining, you could batten things down; if it was hot, you could leave the door flaps open and use the screen to keep the bugs out. The floor was a necessity, in Indy's view. In the jungle, anything that could crawl under a gap would, and the idea of sharing your bed with a scorpion, a hand-sized spider, or—he repressed a shudder—a *snake*? No sir, no thank you, no way. Zipped up fully, the shelters were bug- and snake-proof.

Pup tents, they'd called them when Indy had been in the Boy Scouts, and big enough for two, if you didn't mind lying shoulder-to-shoulder. Plenty of room for one adult.

The tents were held up with poles inside at each end, anchored with wooden pegs driven into the dirt through loops along the edges, and with a couple of guy lines attached to the support poles, front and back. Once set up properly, this kind of tent was very sturdy, and would keep the weather off and the small critters out.

If there was a chance of rain—something more common than not in the tropics during the season—then it was a good idea to trench the perimeter of one's tent. Using a small folding shovel, Indy did this, digging a six-inch-deep ditch around the edges of the tent, as well as a short trench that led slightly downhill from this potential moat. The theory was, if it rained, the trench would keep the water from pooling under the tent's floor and cause it to stream away. It was a lot of work but, like digging a latrine downwind, worth the effort. You didn't want to wake up in the middle of a rainstorm bobbing in a pool of water on the inside of your tent . . .

After he had his tent pitched and trenched, and his bedroll laid out, it was fully dark, only the dim light from the fire's coals and a small kerosene lamp illuminating the area. It had been a long day, and he was ready to sleep. He lost no time in crawling in and stretching out. He always slept head toward the door, an old habit. He pulled the steel zipper down to seal the tent against mosquitoes and drifted off . .

He awoke suddenly, unaware of how much time had passed. He

looked at his watch, the glow-in-the-dark hands dim and barely visible. One fifteen A.M. What had—?

He sensed movement to his left. He rolled slowly and carefully onto his belly, to see better, and reached out to move his revolver to his other side, near to hand.

The night lay heavy on the clearing; the partly cloudy sky admitted little moonlight or stars' gleam. The lamps had been extinguished, and the fire's embers burned low, so what he thought he saw was hard to identify visually. All was gray, most of that deeply so, and it was more an impression than anything he could truly see:

Somebody dancing in the dark.

Not a *zombi*, he didn't think.

His eyes adjusted as much as they were going to, and the form seemed human, and small, and once, when a coal caught a moth or other insect and caused it to flare in the campfire for a second, casting a tiny bit of brighter glow, he realized that the dancer was likely a woman. He couldn't be sure, it was just a blink of what seemed like a bare hip rolling in a quick step, and then the night covered it again.

A woman pretty much narrowed it down.

His mouth felt suddenly dry. Marie. Dancing naked in the dark?

He was dreaming, must be . . .

When he awoke, Indy's back hurt from sleeping on his belly. Resting on the hard ground, something that hadn't bothered him when he'd been young, was a lot less comfortable these days. Might have to start carrying a pad or something . . .

He remembered a dig, years ago, when he had been doing some work for the Smith. It had been in North Africa, Arabia, maybe. He recalled the archaeologist in charge, a professor from one of the Ivy League schools—Harvard? Yale? He'd been an old fossil, as Indy remembered him, but he realized that the man he'd thought ancient had probably been no older than he was now.

Normally, on an excavation that would be worked for months, the tents were high-walled, and people slept on canvas cots, which were considerably more comfortable than the ground. But because this site had been halfway up a rocky hill with almost no flat spots on it to set up camp, smaller tents had been the main shelters. Not much room for a cot, which would have had to be packed in, so Indy, like most of the students and other workers, had slept on the ground. But the professor . . . what had his name been? Dr. Lucas? Something like that. Twenty-five years, he could be forgiven for not remembering the man's name. Anyway, he'd had the damnedest thing with him. The ground cloth

normally used under a bedroll or sleeping bag had in his case been some kind of rubberized pad with what looked like fat tubes or hoses in it. There was a tire valve on one end, and the professor had one of the laborers hook up a tire pump to it. After fifteen minutes or so, there was enough air in the thing that it looked like a small raft.

Indy and the other students had laughed at the old man for that. An . . . air mattress? Whoever heard of such a thing? How sissified was that?

Didn't sound so bad now . . .

When he crawled out of his tent, dawn had just arrived. Others in the camp were already up, including Marie. She saw Indy and nodded at the small campfire. "Hot coffee this morning," she said.

He nodded. He thought about saying something. *Say, was that you I thought I saw dancing naked out here in the wee hours of the morning?*

No, he decided.

But for the coffee, small favors were gratefully appreciated. Indy fetched a cup and poured himself some of the brew. It smelled better than it tasted, but it was hot and strong and he wasn't complaining. It wasn't that bad, and even bad coffee was better than no coffee . . .

As he sipped, Mac crawled out of his tent, stood, shook himself like a wet dog trying to get rid of water in his coat. "I thought I smelled coffee. Any plain hot water, by chance?"

Marie smiled. "As it happens, the blue kettle."

Mac grinned. After he had doused the tea leaves he produced from somewhere with hot water, he said, "I don't suppose we have cream and sugar?"

Indy shook his head. "Still no kippers, either. Might be able to find a rat to roast if you look hard enough."

"Ah, yes, next to fresh eggs and sausage, stale tea and roast rat is my favorite breakfast."

"No rats," Marie said. "This ground is warded. No animals from the forest will come here."

Mac sipped at his tea. "And you know this how?"

She shrugged. "I can feel it the same way you can feel the sun on your face. This clearing is aswirl with power. It is old, but still potent. It lies over the ground like a shroud—it hides that which we seek, and it repels at the same time. It must be why Boukman has not found it before."

"Yeah, I wondered about that," Indy said. "If he's been around for so long, surely he must have heard the stories. Wouldn't he have been curious before now?"

Marie shrugged again. "I cannot say what moves Boukman. He

might have discounted the tales because his magic did not reveal anything—he would trust that more than tall stories told around the cooking fires. It might be that the gods or the loa were not ready for him to find it. I cannot say.”

“Well,” Mac said, “we’re here and he doesn’t seem to be at the moment. Best we get searching for our little item. I don’t suppose your—ah—magic can help us?”

“I think not. Whoever laid this spell upon the land was skilled far beyond anything I can do. I can sense it, but I cannot break it.”

“So, we do it the old-fashioned way,” Indy said. “We look for clues, we set a zero point, we lay out a grid.”

“That might take some time,” Marie said. “It’s a pretty large area.”

Indy grinned. “Maybe not. This is what I do. I have a few tricks.”

“I am sure that you have,” she said, matching his smile.

Of a moment, Indy knew there was no need for him to speak about what he had thought he’d dreamed in the night. It had been real. It had been her.

And she had known he was watching . . .

## NINETEEN

“SCHNAPPS?” GRUBER OFFERED.

“A bit early, but—I wouldn’t say no,” Schäefer said.

It was half past six in the morning. The two men sat in the doctor’s tent, a walled and floored affair tall enough to stand upright without hitting your head on the roof, if you did so in the middle. It had canvas walls that could be rolled down to reveal mosquito nets that would allow a breeze to flow through, but not insects. Inevitably, some bugs did manage to slip inside, and there hadn’t been any breeze to speak of, save that accompanied by heavy rain. Here, it remained damp, hot, and uncomfortable for any except some native born to it, Gruber reckoned. The chairs were simple folding things, of wood and cotton, and the table of like construction. Serviceable gear, under the circumstances.

In the distance, thunder rumbled softly. Some other part of this miserable and hellish island was being drenched by a storm grown angry in the unabated heat of the night, and now spewing its fury in the morning’s humid light.

Gruber produced a pair of silver cups from his kit and into these poured some of the schnapps. He had brought three bottles, carefully packed to avoid breakage. The locals in Port-au-Prince had assured him it was the best available, but that meant little in this part of the world. This liquor was cheap, likely made from apples or pears, possibly even plums, but certainly not cherries. The best of those brews, sometimes called *Kirschwasser*, had a refined, complex, delicious taste, and were quite expensive.

Someday, he would drink from such bottles. After the war.

In the New World, they drank *peppermint* schnapps, a thing that was so vile the very thought of it made Gruber want to shudder.

“*Sieg Prachtvoller*,” Schäefer said. He raised his cup in salute.

“Yes, glorious victory,” Gruber echoed, lifting his own cup.

Both men downed the liquor in one long swallow. Not great, but at least it wasn’t *rum*.

Gruber poured two more.

“So, do you think it was the Japanese who collected our man?”

“No, sir. Perhaps they killed him and hid the body, but there is no sign of him with their party, and where else would they keep him?”

Our scouts say that the Japanese party seems to be short a soldier—they are not sure, the Nipponese could be out in the jungle following the *Engländer* and *Amerikanisch*."

"Perhaps he and our man met and ran off hand in hand to live in the forest together."

Schäfer laughed, a full-throated bray. The idea was beyond silly.

The loss of a man meant nothing against their mission. Nor would the loss of them all.

"And you believe that our quarry has reached their destination?"

"*Jawohl*. Half a kilometer past where they are camped is the sea, according to our outwalkers. It is possible they could turn west and continue that way, but that would make little sense, given the route so far. They have made no moves to pack up their camp this morning."

"And have our watchers seen anything else useful?"

"*Nein*." He sipped at his schnapps. "No ruined temples or anything like that. Of course, it was growing dark when they arrived, and the conditions were not the best for spying. We'll learn more today."

Gruber nodded. "Yes. We shall see what is what soon enough. To victory." He raised his cup.

"To victory!"

Both men upended their cups again.

Yamada, practicing with his wooden sword, saw the scout return to camp. He turned his attention back to his form. One could not allow distractions in one's practice.

A few moments later, Suzuki approached.

Suzuki stood quietly until Yamada had finished his martial dance. Greetings were offered and returned. Suzuki commented on the excellence of Yamada's sword work.

Finally, he got to the main business at hand. "Our quarry has arrived at its destination, Yamada-san."

"Good."

"Our men will watch them and see what transpires."

"Also good."

Suzuki paused, seeming to reflect. "We should perhaps consider what we need to do about . . . the Germans."

"Our stalwart, round-eyed, pale-skinned, bosom friends?"

Both men grinned at that.

Suzuki said, "Either the Englishman and American will find that which we seek or they won't. If they do, we will relieve them of it. I

believe that the Germans might not be content to allow us to retain possession of the item."

Yamada nodded. The enemy in your camp, if you had marked him, could be much less of a threat than one outside. At his first wrong move, you could lop off the head of a man in reach.

The Germans were nominally on the same side as the empire, but Yamada trusted them less than the distance he could walk on water. It was not just that they were treacherous, it was that the treaties that kept them joined in this war were worthless. Everybody on both sides knew this. As soon as the Allies were defeated, the Germans would turn on the empire. There was no room in their hearts for little yellow men; their entire philosophy was racist.

Not that Yamada believed for an instant that his own people were kinder to the notion of foreigners. *Gaijin*—outlanders—were tolerated for many reasons, but no Japanese worth his own sweat believed that *any* of them were *equals*. The notion was absurd. Japan's living god resided in a palace, here on earth—Yamada had seen him more than once. Germany's god lived in the sky, invisible, and not all of the Deutsch even believed there *was* a god. They were savages, the Germans. When the Japanese had been creating bonsai and the art of arranging flowers, the Germans had still been painting themselves green and running naked through the countryside like animals.

If a man was your enemy, it was not wrong to stab him in the back if you could—a samurai expected such things. Once it was known where you stood, not only were surprise attacks acceptable, they were smart. A man slain in his bed was less dangerous than one awake with his sword in hand. Honor was sometimes complex, but if a man who knew you were his enemy was not prepared to deal with you, day or night, front or back? That was *his* failure.

Sooner or later, the empire and the Reich would find themselves at odds. There could be only one world power, and the empire had no intention of ceding the title to pale-skinned barbarians whose culture, such as it was, was crude and wrongheaded. It was not Yamada's decision to make as to when and where that eventual split would take place, but he knew it would happen, as certain as the sun rose each day.

Here and now, however, he did have a choice. His mission was of the utmost importance. His honor lay in fulfilling his task. Nothing less would do. And nothing and no one could be permitted to stand in the way of his task.

"Once the archaeologists find what we came for, we will take care of the Germans before they can become a problem," Yamada said.

Suzuki gave him a slow military bow, and a slight smile to go with

it. They were of like mind on the subject. The Germans would have to be neutralized in such a way that they could offer no threat to his mission. Killed to a man would do the trick nicely.

Suzuki bowed and left, and Yamada went into his tent. He had a duty to which he needed to attend.

As was his custom when traveling, Yamada now and then took time to write a letter to his wife and children. Often there was no way to send such missives, as was the case now, but eventually, he would find a way to post them, and eventually, such mail would wend its way home. It might take weeks or months, and more than once he had actually arrived home before a letter he had written and sent weeks earlier did, which was amusing, but the nature of the mail during war.

His calligraphy in this case was much less formal, though he did strive to keep his pen's strokes clean and sharp.

There were constraints—he could not offer any information that if the letter was somehow intercepted by enemies, would give them aid. Thus there were few specifics, save those that would mean nothing to a nonfamily reader, and many generalities that could be taken to mean a hundred things, none of them militarily useful:

*My Dear Fujiko—*

*As I write this, I am in a forest so thick that the sun's light has difficulty finding me even at noon. The climate here is unlike that of home, and I miss the breezy summer evenings we would be enjoying were I there.*

*I am fine, in good health, and I hope that you, our daughter Isoko, and our son Jiro are well and happy.*

None of the names he used in his letters were the actual names of his family, nor would he use his own for the signature. His wife's real name was Fukiyo, not Fujiko, and they had played this game for so long that it had become a family joke. Sometimes after dinner, when the sake was warm and flowing and the children abed, she would tease him: "Ah, Hajime, and how is your mistress Fujiko these days . . . ?"

They would laugh at that together.

Eventually, this war would be over, and it was Yamada's intention to return to his family and cease roaming the world. The constant sound of hammering from the shipyards, dawn to dusk and back again, from all the vessels being frantically built there, that would ease somewhat. Perhaps even be limited to the daytime, so the nights would once again be peaceful. Their house was half an hour's winding

walk from the main construction, but the sound did carry after the sun went down.

The war would end and there would be no more worries about the possibility of Allied planes dropping bombs on the city. They had been lucky in that respect. Even though his home was in a major seaport, and the industrial sites there produced much ordnance and many ships, thus far such attacks had been few. That far south on the China Sea in Kyushu, far from Tokyo, had largely been spared. With luck, it would continue to be safe.

*I cannot say for certain when I shall return, but I hope it is in time to see the flowers in our garden still in bloom.*

Those would be the hydrangeas, which ran to pinks and whites in their garden. The Chinese tallow trees would have already lost their flowers, and the acrid, waxy seeds would be turning dark and almost ready to be made into oil, which was great for cooking fish and tempura. Perhaps the cherry trees would bear more fruit this year, as well. If he were home by fall, he would know.

*Our mission is proceeding well, and I anticipate success. I hope that this letter finds you and our children and your parents well. I look forward to our meeting with much pleasure. Your loving husband . . .*

Yamada signed the letter “Hanshiro,” the false name he had selected for himself. Another source of humor—when his wife would tease him about his “mistress,” he would draw himself up to an indignant pose and say, “Oh, my mistress? What of your lover, Hanshiro, eh? A young and strong man, is he?”

He set the letter aside for the ink to dry. When that was done, he would fold it carefully and address it—no specifics connected to him there, either, of course. There was a military address in Tokyo to which all such letters went, and a record there showing where they were to be forwarded. Eventually, his posts would make their way south, away from the clutter of Tokyo to his more peaceful and beautiful city made from wood and silk at the southern end of the beautiful land of Japan.

To his wonderful home in Nagasaki . . .

## **TWENTY**

WHEN THE ANGLE of the morning light was as good as it was apt to get, Indy stretched out on the mossy ground, his left cheek touching it. He closed his right eye and scanned the ground using his left eye, looking

...

“What is he doing?” Batiste asked.

Mac said, “Searching for innies or outies—dips or bumps. At ground level, with the light at an angle, the smallest distortion in the surface will be visible. Something buried for a century might have caused the dirt to settle. Or perhaps a hundred years might not be enough for a slight mound to flatten out. People always leave traces unless they are trying very hard to avoid it.”

Indy got up, moved a few feet to the north, and lay back down again. With his eye only an inch or so above the moss carpet, he shifted his gaze slowly back and forth as if reaching out and sweeping crumbs from a tabletop.

He moved for a third observation. Nothing . . . nothing—wait, there

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“Mac, move west, twenty paces, then north about three.”

Mac stepped off the distance.

“A little more . . . right there, mark it.”

Mac pulled out a small pocketknife, opened it, and bent to stick it into the soft ground. He was perhaps ten yards away from the northern edge of the clearing.

Indy stood, brushed himself off. He looked at Marie.

“A slight declivity,” he said. “Now we dig.”

Batiste nodded at a couple of his men.

“No,” Indy said, “Mac and I will have to do it.”

Batiste looked at him.

Indy said, “Tell them, Mac.”

Mac explained. “There is a certain amount of . . . finesse required. One cannot simply thrust a shovel into the ground and risk damaging a priceless artifact. It’s more like . . . peeling an onion than digging a latrine.”

Batiste shrugged. No skin off his nose.

Using the folding shovels, Indy and Mac outlined a square patch about five feet on a side. Carefully, they scraped the moss from the

area, revealing the bare and damp ground beneath it. Both of them stood back and observed the result carefully.

“Now what?” Marie asked.

“We are looking for differences in color, texture, any bits that seem as if they don’t belong.”

“And what do you see?”

Indy shrugged. “Plain old jungle dirt. Humus. All the same.”

Indy and Mac bent to their task again, using the shovels as scrapers rather than diggers. After half an hour, they had another layer of soil exposed, a couple of inches deeper.

The color was somewhat lighter. Indy, in professorial mode, didn’t wait for the question, but delivered the lecture:

“Soil is formed by many things,” he said. “It’s a combination of climate, whatever animals or plants or bacteria are around, the slope of the land, what the underlying parent material might be—clay, rock, sand, and so forth. And time, of course. It can take a few thousand years to build up. The Russians have done a lot of work on the subject—Dokuchaev’s text is the old standard. Jenny’s most recent book, *Factors of Soil Formation*, takes it to another level. Milne uses the term *topo-sequence*.”

Marie nodded.

Batiste looked at him as if he were speaking gibberish.

Mac said, “Dirt is made from the rock or clay and whatever lands on it and rots.”

Batiste laughed. “Lot of big words to say what everybody knows.”

Indy grinned. “That, my friend, is science in a nutshell.”

Mac said, “We’ve removed about a hundred years’ of topsoil, give or take. We will keep doing it this way until we find something or become convinced there is nothing there to find.”

“That could take a while,” Batiste allowed.

“Yeah. But that’s how it’s done.”

The man shrugged.

After two hours of patient scraping, they were down a foot and a half.

“I think we’ve come a cropper,” Mac said.

Indy nodded.

Marie didn’t understand. “But surely they would have buried it deeper,” she said.

“Yeah, but when you dig a hole and then fill it back up with the same dirt, there are usually signs of mixing in the earth. It’s hard to

put it back exactly the same way—some of the newer material gets put lower, some of the older winds up closer to the surface. If there were layers of dirt that were completely different colors—red, blue, green—and you dug, piled up the loose soil, and then tried to shovel it back into a hole, it would be almost impossible to do it so that somebody who knew how to look couldn't tell."

"Ah."

"If we don't spot any signs, chances are nobody has dug here," Mac said. "And we haven't seen any indications that they have."

"So now what?"

"We look for another likely spot and try again."

It was well past noon when Mac and Indy gave up on the second dig, having excavated another five-foot square to a depth of almost two feet.

Both men were sweating, and certainly Indy was tired.

"Perhaps some of Batiste's men could dig," Marie said. "Now that they have seen how you do it. You could oversee their efforts."

Normally, Indy would be less than enthusiastic about such an offer of untrained diggers, but at the moment it sounded like a pretty good idea.

Batiste snorted.

Indy looked at him. "What?"

"It would still take forever that way," he said. "We could be digging here for months."

"You have a better idea?" Mac asked.

Batiste gave them one of his frequent shrugs. "Who were the people who buried this thing?"

"I don't know their bloody names," Mac said. "And it doesn't matter."

"Wait. Wait. He has a point," Indy said. He wanted to whack the heel of his hand against his forehead. How stupid was he? He should have known!

"And his point is, pray tell . . . ?"

"They wouldn't have just picked a spot at random and dug," Indy said. "These were people being driven to hide something of great value to them. Something dangerous. They probably expected they'd return for it—or that somebody else would."

"And . . . ?"

"They'd have to know exactly where to dig, or give directions to somebody who'd never been here. There'd have to be a map, or it

would have to be something oral that would be easy to remember.”

“Ah,” Mac said. “Yes, I see. Some kind of marker.”

“Assume that this clearing was here then,” Indy said. “How would you do that? Mark it?”

“So many paces from a certain tree, in a certain direction,” Marie offered.

Indy shook his head. “Too risky. The storms that blow through here could take down any of these trees. It would have to be a more permanent landmark.”

Mac looked around. “I don’t see anything. No rocks, no rises, nothing but flat ground. Pointer shadows or beams, you’d have the same problem.”

Batiste said, “Shadows? Beams?”

Indy said, “Certain time of day, certain time of year, a shadow cast by a tree or rock spire, or a beam of light shining through a hole drilled in a wall, like that. It’s very common in ancient religions to use such things, because the sun and moon are constants. Meatball astronomy.”

Mac glanced up. “The night sky would be visible here. A certain star, perhaps?”

Indy said, “Maybe if they had a sextant and a compass or somesuch. But that would make the time to find the right spot critical. Maybe even a certain day—solstice, perhaps.”

Batiste laughed.

“Something funny?” Indy said.

“*Oui*. You make things too complicated, *mon ami*. The men who came here through the forest, who found this spot? They would not be scientists, to calculate such things. They would not be bearing instruments to observe the sun or moon or the stars.”

Indy considered that. Probably true. But they would have known enough about the land to know that a tropical storm could take out what landmarks were available. If the tree you used was gone, then what?

“All right,” Indy said. “If you had come here to bury a treasure, what would you have done to mark it? So that ten or fifty or a hundred years later, you or your grandson could come here and dig it up, without digging holes for days?”

“Nobody would know this was the clearing where I chose to hide it,” Batiste said, “so there would be no reason for them to come here and know it was here.”

“Yeah. So . . . ?”

“So it is simple. I would remember where it was, and if I had to tell my son or grandson, it would be easy:

“Go stand in the middle. Dig there.”

Indy and Mac looked at each other.

“Stone the bloody bleeding crows,” Mac said. “Of course!”

Indy nodded. Sometimes being the most educated guy in the room wasn’t an advantage. You tended to overthink things . . .

## TWENTY-ONE

ENSCONCED IN the form of his *zombi*, Boukman watched through dim and fuzzy eyes. They dug holes in the ground. One there. A second one. Then they started a third one. Ah. They did not know exactly where it was. Interesting.

Gruber looked at the scout. “You came back to report that they are digging holes?”

“Yessir.”

“Amazing. And have they found anything?”

“No, *mein Colonel*.”

“Then return and keep watch. I don’t care how many pits they excavate, only if they come up with something from one of them.”

Yamada finished another scroll, this one with the *kanji* for “success” inked upon the paper. Suzuki waited outside the tent.

“They have begun digging. They are on the third hole.”

Yamada nodded. “It might take them a while. It does not seem as if they know the location of the object.”

“*Hai*.”

“Continue our surveillance.”

“*Hai*.”

\* \* \*

Two feet down, and when Indy and Mac stepped back to look, they could both see it.

“Different stratum, just there.”

Indy nodded. “Yes.”

Marie, who had been talking to Batiste, walked over. “Something?”

“That mixing of the dirt we talked about,” Indy said. He felt a surge of excitement.

He and Mac returned to their digging.

It was almost four thirty in the afternoon and four feet deep when Indy felt the edge of his shovel scrape something. “Gotcha,” he said quietly.

Mac, sitting on the edge of the hole, drinking from a canteen and taking a break, said, “What?”

Indy grinned up at him.

It took another hour to reveal the outline of the crypt and to dig deep enough to see the way into it, a stone box whose top was about the size of a steamer trunk stood on end. The top had been fitted to the box and the edges sealed with some kind of resin. Indy worked the point of the small folding shovel into the sealant, which cracked and allowed him to get the blade between the top and the rest of the box. Mac put his shovel into the opposite side. The two of them worked their way around the perimeter, carefully chipping the resin away.

“I think that’s got it,” Mac said.

Indy nodded. He put the shovel down, pulled his machete out, and, again moving with great care, sawed the edge of the big knife between the top and bottom all the way across, as if slicing bread.

“Here we go . . .”

He pried the lid up a hair, enough to get his fingers under the edge, and slid the stone, about an inch thick, to the side. He and Mac grabbed the lid and lifted it clear.

“Flashlight,” Indy said.

Batiste offered him one. Indy pressed the switch forward and pointed the beam into the box.

“Looks like oilcloth,” Indy said. He reached into the box. He was careful—sometimes the people who hid their treasures left nasty surprises to protect them. Nothing should still be alive after more than a century and a half under the ground, nothing natural, but a poisoned spike or some kind of sharp-edged trap was possible.

He pulled slowly on the cloth. Came up with a wrapped bundle the size of a concrete block, a dark gray color.

*Carefully—carefully!* Indy started to unwrap it . . .

The oilcloth, in surprisingly good shape, fell away to reveal a wooden box, of a size that might contain a pair of men’s shoes. The lid to this was attached by copper hinges gone green and a turn-clasp. The wood was carved with symbols all over, something that looked vaguely like runes. The carvings were not in a language that Indy recognized, but they seemed somehow familiar. Akin to Egyptian hieroglyphics, maybe?

Indy turned the clasp and opened the lid, using the flashlight, leaning to one side to avoid something that might be spring-loaded and capable of stabbing his hand or spraying up into his face.

Nothing of that sort erupted from the box.

Inside, a second wooden object, this one a stubby cylinder as big around as a man's leg, a foot long, and of a darker wood than the outer box, ebony, mahogany, perhaps, and also inscribed with the unfamiliar runes.

The lid on this jar had no hardware on it but seemed snug, and it took Indy but a few seconds to realize the lid was held on with threads, like a screw.

Indy unscrewed it, slowly and carefully.

It moved smoothly, as though lubricated.

No spring-loaded darts or immortal snakes jumped out, another relief . . .

Inside the wooden jar was a piece of black cloth—silk, Indy guessed.

He looked at Mac, who nodded, eyes wide with excitement.

Indy removed it, unwrapped it, and inside that . . .

There it was. A pearl the size of a man's fist.

And what a glorious thing!

It was less round than egg- or heart-shaped, and the way it caught the light of the afternoon sun was stunning. Indy blinked at the raw beauty of it. It seemed to swirl with bright, iridescent smoke and fire, not really black, but more of a deep, dark, metallic, blue-green shade, an electric gunmetal color . . .

Amazing. Looking at it resting on the black silk in his palm, it was as if he could see miles into it.

He had viewed pearls, of course, many cultures valued them, but nothing close to this gem—

He looked at Marie in triumph—only to see that she had collapsed next to the excavation, as if she had been knocked unconscious by a big hammer.

## TWENTY-TWO

THE UNLEASHED DYNAMISM of the thing the *imen blan* had just dug up slammed into Boukman's *zombi* horse like a giant's boot. The *zombi* collapsed as if suddenly boneless, overwhelmed by the exposure, and Boukman knew if he didn't get out of it and back to his own body fast, he, too, would be lost. Any spirit wandering around here would be cooked by the flame of this magical fire!

Such force! It was like opening the door to a raging furnace—he was blasted by the raw etheric heat of it!

Old magic, this, closer to the Grand Source, and still vibrantly potent after all these years. Remarkable. Stunningly so.

He left as quickly as he could, astounded at the energies that now radiated from that clearing below and behind him. It was as if somebody had plucked the sun from the sky and put it on the ground!

He felt weak. As soon as he could get back to his body, he would do what needed to be done. He had to move with care—he could not risk losing this new treasure. Oh, no. He must have this. It would transform him.

It would transform the *world* . . .

\* \* \*

Indy shoved the treasure at Mac and leaped to attend Marie where she had fallen. Batiste was already kneeling next to her.

The other men in their party had all moved back from the excavation, as if they had found themselves standing next to a sudden bonfire whose heat they couldn't stand.

Batiste looked down at Mac. "Put it away!" he said. "The pearl!"

Mac frowned at him.

"Do it now!"

Mac wrapped the gem in the silk and put it back into the jar.

As soon as he replaced the lid, Marie moaned, and her eyes fluttered open.

Indy said, "Marie? Are you okay?"

She said something he didn't understand.

Batiste said, "Yes, even I felt it."

Marie sat up. "*Mon Dieu. Magie géante.*"

Indy knew that term. Giant magic.

She looked at him. "Boukman will be coming for it. This artifact is more than just a pearl—it is lightning in a bottle—old, old magic, and anyone with any power will feel its release. It is like a volcano erupting."

She looked at the wooden jar. "The container wards it, keeps its power contained. Take it out, and it will shine into the heavens like a searchlight—Boukman will be able to see it half the world away. We cannot hide it from him unless it is warded."

She scrambled to her feet. "We must go, now."

"Now? It'll be getting dark in a few hours—" Mac said.

"We cannot wait. Nor can we go home the same way we came. Boukman will know that route."

"Not to mention the Japs and the Krauts back there," Indy said.

She shook her head. "They are not the problem. Boukman will move Heaven and Earth to collect this pearl. And more than anything, he cannot be allowed to do so. Before we let him take it, we should destroy it!"

Mac and Indy both frowned at this. "Hold on a moment," Mac began. "Let us not be hasty—"

She was no longer listening. "Batiste, pack up. Anything we can leave behind, leave it. We have to move fast, and we have to move now!"

"Marie—" Mac began.

"Listen to me—if Boukman catches us and gets this pearl, we are all dead, and we will be but the first of many to die. He will lay whole countries low. If you believe nothing else that I say, believe this!"

Indy looked at Mac. "You heard the lady. Grab your backpack and let's get the hell out of here!"

He had expended too much of himself, Boukman realized when he reattained his body. Travel in the Other Realm always took much energy, one had to return to the real world now and then to recover, and he had seldom been able to project his spirit more than two or three times without a long interval. Fifty years ago, he might have made another immediate leap, but the past two days had drained him. And that brush with the old magic in the clearing had not helped. It had sucked at his fleeing spirit like a vortex, drawing at his essence. He would only be able to manage one more short jaunt now, if that, and he had to make it count.

If he had his *zombis* attack Marie's *imen blan* to steal the artifact, his

slaves would still be at risk from the Germans and Japanese, who also wanted the treasure, albeit for different reasons. Marie and her white men weren't going to get far in any kind of hurry, and he knew where they were going to go eventually. So . . . it would be best to eliminate the competition now.

Yes. He would find and ride one of the Sons or Daughters of the Potion, one who still had air with which to operate his or her voice, and he would use that one to task the others. He wouldn't have much time—he would have to hurry before he grew any weaker.

Boukman gathered what power he still had to himself, took a deep breath, and sent his weakened and unsteady *âme* forth. Once more, he could manage that. He had to—there was no other choice.

When their spy reported back, Gruber was most pleased. At last! “I think it is time that we go and collect our prize, *jawohl, mein Kapitän?*”

“Ja,” Schäefer said. He grinned.

All going well, in a few minutes, certainly less than an hour, they would have what they had traveled to this hellhole to get and be on their way home. An unpleasant mission, but with a satisfactory conclusion, and that was the important thing—

Somebody screamed.

Not just a scream, but a sound full of absolute terror—

Gruber's hand had, without conscious intent, snatched his pistol from its holster, not that ugly, clunky .45 automatic, but a fine Luger Parabellum that he'd gotten from Schäefer. He thumbed the safety off

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—More screams followed, punctuated by rifle fire, several shots in rapid sequence, and whatever the cause, the element of surprise they might have had over the archaeologist's party was certainly gone. Gunfire was noisy—

“What is this?”

He saw one of the SS men standing ten meters away, his Mauser rifle aimed. The man fired—once, twice, three times, working the bolt frantically—the sound loud and bouncing back from the trees—

The man's target took the impact of the bullets in the chest not five meters in front of the soldier. Gruber saw him jerk as the bullets smacked into him—but watched in awe as he kept going—

The soldier fired again, twice more—and the attacker was on him, knocking the rifle aside, grabbing the soldier in a bear hug, and sinking his teeth into the man's throat—!

Around them, other attackers charged in—some of them took

bullets and fell, others did not—

Why? How? *Impossible!*—!

One of the natives, a dark-skinned and bald fellow, came at Gruber. He was unarmed, arms spread wide to grab, and Gruber felt the panic envelop him as he pointed the Luger and squeezed the trigger—one-two-three-four-five—!

The bald man stumbled, fell to his knees, and collapsed—

Next to him, Schäefer, his own Luger raised, fired repeatedly at a woman half his size, but—

Gruber saw the woman take the bullets to the body, four, five, six, and the last round tore a chunk of flesh from her neck—he saw the gap appear as if a child had poked his finger into a clay figure and ripped it, but there was no blood, and she kept coming—

Schäefer dropped his empty pistol and reached for a knife on his belt, managed to get it clear, and thrust it at the woman as she fell on him. It was a long knife—Gruber saw the blade enter her torso near her left hip, saw it sink to the hilt—

—saw the blade emerge from her back—

Schäefer screamed. “Help!”

She bore him down, teeth working, biting his face, his hands as he tried to push her off—

Gruber stood there, frozen. God in Heaven, what kind of thing was this? That could take a magazineful of bullets, a knife stab to the body, and not be stopped? Unreal—

“Gruber! Help me! Aaahh—!”

Gruber ran, in a full panic. It was too late for Schäefer, and he did not wish to suffer the same fate. Behind him, gunfire continued.

As did the screams.

The bullets didn’t seem to affect all of them, Yamada saw, but he had his sword, and when one of them came at him he took its head. The razor-edged steel of his katana cleaved through the rotten flesh and bone without slowing, and whatever evil thing dwelled in the creature, it was not strong enough to keep it going without a head. The severed skull rolled—the monster’s body collapsed.

“The head!” Yamada yelled. “Shoot them in the head!”

Around him, the remainder of his men—some of them—heard and obeyed. Half a dozen shots later, the jungle fell silent . . .

No, that wasn’t true. There was more gunfire, but it was distant, not close to them.

The Germans. Or the archaeologists?

He looked around. Most of his men were down, dead or dying.

Three of them still stood, two soldiers and Captain Suzuki. Suzuki had used his sword to good effect, as well.

"We will grieve for our fallen brothers later," Yamada said. "For now we need to get away from here, quickly!"

They ran. He regretted having to leave his calligraphy materials behind. If he survived, he could return for them someday. The tent might withstand the wind and rain for a season or two.

If he did not survive, it would not matter.

In the forest, Gruber took stock. He had two men left, the rest . . . well, they were dead, dying, or lost, and he was not going to waste any time looking for survivors. He had replaced his pistol's spent magazine but he had no faith in it, nor in the second pistol he had tucked away in his pocket, a flat, single-shot 7.65 mm, handmade by a clever Swiss jeweler, thin enough to be tucked into a wallet. Some officers carried a poison pill they could take if captured. Gruber preferred an option, to kill his captor and take his chance on escape. The Swiss pistol was a last resort, and if the Luger wouldn't stop the attackers, the tiny gun wouldn't do the job.

Some of the attackers could be stopped with a gun, some not, and you would likely not know which was which until it was too late. Better to avoid them all.

He was still warring with his notion that such a thing could not possibly be.

One of the men said, "Somebody is coming!"

The two soldiers raised their rifles, trembling in fear, and Gruber held his pistol out, unable to keep his own arm from shaking.

"Don't shoot," somebody called out. The voice spoke English but the accent was heavy and Gruber immediately realized who the speaker must be—

"Lower your weapons," Gruber ordered.

The two soldiers glanced at him in wonder, but he had already pointed his pistol at the ground. They obeyed his orders, of course.

"Come ahead," Gruber said, also in English.

Yamada, carrying an unsheathed sword, followed by three Japanese men, stepped into view.

"Dr. Gruber," he said. He offered a slight bow.

"Dr. Yamada," Gruber responded.

"Are these all your survivors of the attack?"

Gruber nodded. "As far as I know."

Yamada nodded at his own men. “We are what remains of our group. It would seem wise for us to combine our forces against those terrible *gaki* of the forest.”

Gruber didn’t recognize the word Yamada used, but he understood the sense of it: Monsters. Demons. Not ordinary humans as he knew them. Silly, but—“Yes. We all know why we are here. We must survive, and we must obtain the secret of these creatures. Our armies would be unstoppable.”

There was no point in speaking of their competition to this point. Done was done.

“You will agree that we share this discovery, then, once we obtain it? Equally?” Yamada had lowered his sword so that the tip pointed at the ground.

“Yes, I agree. Once we obtain it.” That seemed less certain than it had only an hour earlier. Most of his men were dead, and the same with the Japanese group. Only seven of them together.

“Perhaps we should find a safer place, if we can, to discuss our strategy.”

“Good idea, Dr. Yamada.”

## **TWENTY-THREE**

THE GUNFIRE seemed distant, but sound in the forest could be tricky. How far away the shots were—from rifles and pistols, as best Indy could tell—was impossible to determine with any kind of precision.

“Now what?” Mac said.

Marie said, “If I had to guess, I’d say the Germans and the Japanese are dealing with Boukman’s slaves.”

“Why them and not us?” Indy asked.

She shrugged into her backpack, adjusted it, and nodded at Batiste. They were leaving behind the tents and most of the cooking supplies, and taking only enough food and water to keep them going for a couple of days. Long and slow meals around the campfire weren’t going to be part of the program. Nor campfires, either. If you were running and hiding, you didn’t light beacons to draw your enemies. And if something that wanted to kill you was on your trail, you didn’t stop moving until you could no longer keep going.

“Boukman knows we won’t be able to get far and that he will be able to find us when he wants. I might be able to throw him off—there is a spell I haven’t tried, it might help—but the Germans and the Japanese, they could be a danger to his plans. If he gets rid of them, he eliminates the risk that they might get the artifact and manage to fight their way past his *zombis*.”

“Cutthroat the competition,” Indy said.

“Yes. Perhaps literally. And there is something else to consider.”

“Which is?” Indy had his own pack loaded and shouldered, an extra canteen strapped to his belt, and extra ammunition in his pockets. His bullwhip was attached to his belt with a slipknot so he could get it into play in a hurry, if it came to that.

If it came to that, things were going to be bad . . .

“The Japanese or Germans who fall might not stay fallen. If his true zombies are destroyed, he can replace them.”

Indy shook his head. Wasn’t *that* just great?

Batiste said, “We will head for the coast. There may be a way to skirt the edge of the forest for a bit, to get a lead on our pursuers.”

“‘May be?’” Mac said.

Batiste said, “We have few options. We know how long it takes to cut our way through the jungle. If we can save any time by not having

to do so, it is to the good.”

“Can’t argue with that,” Indy said. In his backpack were the wooden boxes containing the Heart of Darkness. At least they had found it, and had possession of it. For now. If Marie was right—and he had no reason to believe she wasn’t—then there were things out there in the woods who would be coming for them.

They surely didn’t want to be here when that happened.

Batiste frowned and looked up. He sniffed.

“Rain coming,” he said. “Big rain.”

Indy glanced up, too. The late-afternoon sky was clear, not a cloud in sight.

Batiste said, “Not today. Tomorrow. Might be to our advantage, might not, but *hurikán* on the way, for sure.”

Indy wanted to laugh. Just when you thought things were as bad as they could be, they got worse. Never failed.

Oh, well. Part of the job.

They set off.

Boukman nearly died.

The last trip to instruct his slaves and the return to his body was almost too much. He had taken his form for granted for so long, kept it vital with the application of his skills and magic, that the idea of it actually failing him hadn’t ever really seemed possible. He had been alive longer than any man he knew of, certainly in the Caribbean region.

He had barely made it back from the Other Realm. Another two minutes? It would have been too late. He’d had to thrust hard to force his spirit back into his body, which didn’t want to accept it. The struggle had exhausted him, in both realms.

When, at last, he managed it and awoke, the heat that normally would not have been noticeable lay on him like a heavy blanket. His heart beat rapidly, his eyes fluttered, and his breathing was shallow and fast. He trembled, was too weak to even sit up at first. He had nearly spent himself during the last couple of days, and he was not going to be able to wave his hand, importune a passing loa for added energy, and shake it off like a dog does water. His vessel was tired and weakened, and importing energy not its own before repairing it might well cause it to burst.

It was ironic. Out there in the jungle was a source of power that could raise the dead by the thousands—raise them and make them dance. But any hand that dared to use it thus had to be strong and

steady. How much time he would need before he was recovered enough to risk it he did not know, but it wasn't going to be in the next few hours. Another attempt to fly into the Other Realm now would be the end of him. He had no doubt.

Power beyond measure was out there—and he could not go to it.

Any enemy who saw him now could destroy him with a minimum of effort, and Boukman did not care for that thought at all.

He needed food, drink, and blood. He needed medicines, and he needed sacrifices, and even then it would not be a thing done before the sun had come and gone, maybe more than once.

He managed to sit up. He drew in a breath to call for an attendant—someone would be outside, awaiting just such a command. There was no way that Marie and the *imen blan* could get off the island safely for at least a day or two, and even then they must return to Haiti, where Boukman's forces were also strong. They would not get that far, though. He was sure of it.

And he had left instructions for his slaves. It would have to do for now. There was no help for it.

Yamada had sheathed his sword, after carefully wiping it as clean as he could of the bloodless and greasy flesh that had smeared it. The wooden sheath he had under his belt held the blade secure, edge-up, and ready for an instant draw and cut. After years of practice, Yamada could, now and again, achieve the state called *zanshin*—a complete melding of body and spirit so that the sword could go from sleeping in its wooden bed to effortlessly appearing in his hand, ready to strike, in less time than the blink of an eyelid. The thought was the deed.

He and his men followed Gruber's lead—it was not a matter of any importance who led a retreat, only who led an attack, and given their forces they were going to have to be most selective in such matters. Falling gloriously in battle was honorable; failing your mission by dying first was not.

Yamada had heard stories of samurai who had sustained mortal wounds but managed to stay alive long enough to take their killer with them. Spirit mattered. And that was surely somehow involved with these *gaki*, that they could do the same . . .

"One doctor to another," Gruber said, keeping to English as they walked along a narrow and winding animal trail, "have you ever seen anything like that before?"

Yamada shook his head. "No. Some of the attackers were as you and I—a bullet to the heart dropped them. Others were invulnerable to guns or knives. Removing the head of these worked, and perhaps a

shot to the brain might do it, but I did not witness any such shots.

"I cannot imagine that any potion would offer such protection, no matter what it was made from. Nor why it would work on some, but not others."

"But what else could it be?" Gruber said.

"*Gaki*," he said. "Hungry ghosts. Undead wanderers."

Gruber shook his head. "I do not believe in fairy tales. I am a man of science."

"As am I. But I have no science to explain these things. Have you?"

Gruber shook his head. "No. But because I haven't uncovered the reason yet does not mean that it is supernatural."

"Nor does it mean that it is not. There are many things under the heavens that science cannot explain."

Gruber shrugged, unconvinced, and Yamada did not choose to continue the discussion. Instead, he said, "Regardless of that, the reason we are here is unchanged, and certainly, somebody locally has the formula or some variant of it, and there is ample evidence that it has some efficacy."

"Indeed, Doctor, indeed. We must obtain it. Nothing the Allies have could stand up to soldiers bolstered by this medication. Those people in the woods were not even armed—they attacked men with rifles bare-handed. Imagine how effective they would have been had they been shooting or even using machetes!"

"I suspect that had that been the case, we would not be here to speak of it," Yamada said.

"Precisely my point."

They had been walking for nearly an hour, and one of the German soldiers came back and offered a quick report to Gruber.

Yamada's German was excellent, and he easily understood the soldier's comments. There was a stream not far ahead, and a curved rocky outcrop near it. It would be a place that would offer some protection on three sides—anybody trying to come at them by swimming the river or climbing the hill wouldn't have an easy time of it. A good spot to stop and consider future plans.

Yamada pretended to less understanding than he had. In English, he asked: "What did he say?"

"There's a place to stop up ahead that's somewhat sheltered and defendable," Gruber said. "It might be a good idea to rest and plan what we need to do next."

In this much, the man was telling the truth. "Good thought, Dr. Gruber. Please have your man lead us there."

Gruber had little respect for foreign tongues, believing as most in his homeland did that civilized people would all eventually come to speak German. Even so, he had good English, some French, a smattering of Italian; as soon as the war broke out, he had learned basic Japanese. They said that a man's language shaped how he thought, and Gruber considered it wise to learn as much about how his enemies—and allies—thought, to at least know the rudiments of their tongues. Yamada didn't know that Gruber had any Nihongo, and Gruber wasn't going to let on that he did. Never knew but that somebody who thought you couldn't understand him might allow something useful to slip. And he suspected that Yamada probably understood some German, so Gruber wouldn't make the mistake of saying something he wanted to keep secret aloud in *any* language in front of Yamada. Some of these little yellow men were clever; it would be folly to underestimate them with so much at risk.

They needed each other now; survival might depend on it. After they had claimed the prize, well, the idea of sharing it with the Japanese? That was but a convenient fiction. Herr Hitler would have this presented to him with clicking heels and a grand flourish. The Emperor Hirohito would never see it, of that Gruber was certain.

## **TWENTY-FOUR**

INDY BROUGHT UP the rear as they moved along the swine trail through the forest. The smell of the sea was in the air, and they were close enough to hear waves breaking. They had the artifact, they were free and moving, things could be a lot worse, knock on wood.

It had been only forty minutes or so before they came to the cliffs, and when they arrived and he looked over the sheer drop, Indy could see they weren't likely to climb down. The dark gray rock had a spongy look to it—like pumice, but with bigger holes—and the distance was 180 or 200 feet, almost vertical, to a shore that was gravel and jagged rock, with breakers rolling in to spray as they hit the stone.

Fall, break your legs, drown when the tide came in. Not pleasant prospects.

Indy was a few feet back. He moved closer to the edge. He put his right boot down on the honeycombed rock and swiveled his heel with a little force, to see how solid the—

—a section of the cliff's face six inches thick and half a yard wide sheared off and tumbled down to the rocks. When it impacted, it broke apart as if it were made of glass.

No, they weren't going that way, no siree . . .

"This way," Batiste said. "You want to stay back from the edge."

There was advice Indy could take.

The bad thing was that the cliff was unstable. The good thing was that the trees stopped several yards away from the precipice, and there was, at least for the next few hundred yards, an open path that skirted the edge.

It would be dark soon, though, and no way did they want to be walking, either here or in the forest, so they'd have to stop. They needed the rest, but—

Indy moved up to stand by Marie. "The Germans and Japanese will have to call it quits at night, like we will," he said. "But what about the zombis? Can they function in the dark?"

"Not particularly well," she said. "The True Risen can't see as clearly as even we can, but then again they cannot easily die. If one falls over this cliff and hits the rocks, it may break so many bones that it won't be able to walk."

“That’s something.”

“If it can climb and crawl, though, it will.”

Indy stared at her. “Even I can outrun somebody going that slow.”

“As can the hare outrun the tortoise,” she said.

He blinked at her.

“A *zombi* dispatched on a task will continue to move using whatever is left to it, without ever having to rest,” she said. “While we are sleeping, it will be crawling . . .”

Indy shivered at the thought of a man with broken legs doggedly dragging himself along on his bloody elbows . . .

Mac edged over to where they walked. “What?”

“You don’t want to know,” Indy said.

Boukman drank from the bowl, sipping at the blood therein. It was warm, and he needed to finish it before it cooled, for clotted blood was of no use to him; its power faded quickly once it was out of its container. He had taken a pint from one of the potion-slaves, a pint from another, and that was enough to start.

He had leaves brought in and piled into a soft pad, covered with a sheet, upon which he could lay. Two of his slaves stood nearby, waving large palmetto fans to circulate the air over him.

He had laid a restoration spell, offered a chicken and a goat to the proper loa for their assistance. He had eaten fruit and bread and roast pig, washed down with the blood.

It was all he could do for now. He would have to sleep and allow his work to help heal his body and spirit. This spent, ideally, he would stay quiet for several days, a week, longer. He could not do that now. Time was of the essence, and even this amount of forced rest tried his patience, though he knew he had no other option.

He finished the bowl of blood, had it removed, and lay down upon the bed. He closed his eyes. He deepened his breathing, slow and long, to bathe his innards in life-giving air. He felt it flow into his limbs, into his feet. His toes. Fresh air in; used air, out; easing slowly his aches and pains.

At the edge of his consciousness, before he drifted off, he was aware of something . . .

Storm. A storm was coming.

There would be power in that. He might be able to use it. Hurricane-loa were fierce and manic and they sometimes would extend favors when the winds tore at the world, just because it pleased them to do so . . .

Yamada had composed a death-poem as they walked, a simple haiku about a falling cherry blossom, just in case. He did not feel impending doom, but men had been surprised by Death's cold touch many times, and it was best to be prepared if there was a chance of sudden demise.

Now, in the lee of a rock outcropping next to a stream, Yamada considered his new circumstances as night crept in to steal away the day. In the final gleamings of the dusk, there were many things he must consider and resolve as best he could.

Gruber, of course, would say whatever he thought was necessary to stay alive. A cornered rat facing a pack of dogs had more honor than the German, of this Yamada was sure. But things had taken a dire turn, and since survival was paramount, a man had to use the tools at hand. He would not trust Gruber, but he recognized that the man might be crucial to Yamada's mission.

"Schnapps, Doctor?" As usual, they spoke in English.

Yamada had been aware of Gruber's approach, though he pretended otherwise.

"Thank you, but I think not."

Gruber sat next to where Yamada rested on a fallen log, and raised a small silver flask to his lips. He took three swallows of whatever was in the container. Yamada could smell the alcohol as the man removed the flask from his lips. "Want to keep a clear head, eh?"

Yamada gave him a slow nod.

"Personally, I think a few sips of good schnapps helps in that regard. Clears away the cobwebs. Of course, this is not good schnapps, but it is what I have." He took another drink.

"The scouts should be back soon," Gruber continued.

"It is to be hoped so."

They had each sent one of their men in the joint effort. For safety, Yamada had said, and Gruber had nodded, but both men knew that safety was not the reason. Neither trusted the other's man to come back with a completely objective report for both to hear.

"The American and Englishman will not be able to travel any better in the dark than we," Gruber said. "We will be able to catch them."

"Perhaps."

Gruber screwed the cap onto the flask and slipped it into his pocket. "Perhaps? You don't believe that the cream of the German SS and of the imperial army can move faster than some out-of-shape civilians?"

"In an ordinary race, there would be no question of it," Yamada said. "But we are chasing them to fulfill our mission. They must be aware that they are running for their lives. Such knowledge can offer impetus to move faster."

Gruber chuckled. "Of course. But I think you over-estimate them."

"Perhaps." He paused for a moment. Then: "There is a story in our country. A man, of no great talent or achievement, was condemned to die by the local *daimyo*. You know the term?"

"Warlord, isn't it?"

"Near enough. The condemned man worked as a simple laborer on an estate, cleaning the walks, pulling weeds. He had committed no crime, but somebody of high status had been offended by his manner or his look—the reason doesn't matter. They complained, and the *daimyo* sent his executioner to slay the laborer.

"Such things were of no importance back in those days, the removal of a servant for small reason—or no reason at all. People lived or died on a ruler's whim."

Gruber nodded, as if he understood that.

"The *daimyo*'s executioner was a samurai most skilled with his sword. He found the man on a pathway, using a broom to sweep the leaves away. He announced himself and his purpose. Pulled his sword, and strode in to cut the laborer down."

Gruber nodded. "Yes . . . ?"

"Know that this was no great event for the executioner. He was an expert, he had killed many men, armed, skilled opponents, with swords, spears, arrows, even his bare hands. He had never lost a match, and he was as calm as a frozen pond on a windless January day.

"The laborer had no skill with weapons at all. It was the samurai's duty, a chore that needed little of his ability, and he was unconcerned about the outcome. He was a master swordsman, the greatest such for miles in any direction.

"The condemned man had done nothing wrong, he knew it, and he did not wish to die for no reason. He charged the samurai assassin using his broom."

"And was quickly hacked to small pieces for his trouble, eh?"

"No. So fierce was the man's attack that the samurai had to give ground. The broom was everywhere—the man had wielded it for much of his life, and it was a tool with which he was comfortable. The executioner took hard knocks from the stout wood as the laborer attacked like a man possessed of a demon."

He paused again. "A man who knows he is about to die, with nothing to lose? He can be a formidable foe."

Gruber nodded. "What happened?"

"It was only when the samurai was pressed and in danger of defeat that he was able to unleash his own fear. Only then could he call up

his own inner demon to match that of his attacker so that his superior skill was able to come into play. When that happened, he cut the laborer down.”

Gruber smiled. “All is well that ends well.”

Yamada shrugged.

Gruber frowned. “Once the samurai was cranked up, he defeated the laborer, right? The end was never really in question, was it?”

“No. But he learned a lesson: Never to take an opponent for granted.”

“But, Doctor, all the laborer was able to do was fend off his death for a bit longer. In the end, he died.”

Yamada favored Gruber with a small smile. “And in the end, we all die, do we not? Isn’t that the goal of most men in their lives? To fend off death for a bit longer?”

“We will catch them, Dr. Yamada. We must.”

“I agree, Doctor. But I do not think it will necessarily be easy—and I do not think we should assume so.”

The two scouts chose that moment to reappear, and Gruber waved them over.

Yamada listened more to Gruber’s man making his report than he did his own, and the German soldier’s account was substantially the same as that of Yamada’s soldier. Their quarry was some distance away and probably stopped for the night. They could not be certain of their exact position, because there were pickets, and the scouts did not wish to reveal their presence; still, it seemed reasonable.

“And could we move through the dark and take them?” Gruber asked.

The German soldier was polite and deferential, but the essence of his reply was that such action would be dangerous in the extreme. The cliff face near the sea was unstable; a misstep would be fatal. If the pickets were able to offer a warning, a direct attack would be risky. There were more people in the civilian party than in the German and Japanese camps together, and all of them were armed, with machetes and with guns. While the tactical superiority of German and even Japanese military troops over such a ragtag assemblage was unquestioned, a frontal assault on a larger, armed force, in the dark, without the element of surprise? Perhaps not the wisest course. Better to catch them somewhere unexpected, *jawohl?*

Yamada’s solider had much the same assessment. Though he was, of course, more willing to lay down his life than the German was, even such a sacrifice would not ensure victory. It would not be the best strategy. And, though he did not address it, Yamada knew the man

must be thinking about the superhuman creatures that had wiped out most of their number. One had to know they were still out there somewhere. And who knew what they might do? Or how well they could function in the dark? Maybe they had eyes like cats?

No, stealth was the proper path here. Not samurai, but more like ninja. Less personal honor involved, but the mission was more important than even that. Personal glory might have to be put aside to satisfy the mission, and if so, then that was how it would be.

After the scouts were finished, Gruber and Yamada sent them back out to keep watch. That left five men in their combined group, and they would need to post a couple to stand guard. It would not be the most comfortable night's rest, sleeping on the ground, but Yamada had been through worse, as he was sure Gruber had. They would endure. They would continue following their prey, and at the right moment they would strike.

Boukman felt the thing behind him, though he was too afraid to turn and look at it—he knew the sight would freeze his heart solid. It was gaining, and try as he might he could not increase his speed, the air itself seem thickened to a gel, it was as if he were trying to walk and swim at the same time and managing to do neither very well.

He could feel it. He could smell it now, it was a thousand years of mold overlaid with the offal behind a butcher's shop on a hot summer day. It reeked with the hot breeze from a village latrine overflowing with waste. Ashes and brimstone and obscene heat . . .

And he could hear it, too, a rasp of a tree-sized coarse file on rock, a breathy whistle, a steam kettle coming to boil.

Boukman swore and pumped his legs and arms harder. Useless as they were, he had lost his gun and his machete, even his clothes were gone, and his young and strong body moved like that of an old cripple. It would be on him in a moment, and he would be engulfed in a horror beyond all comprehension.

He felt the touch of something loathsome on his bare shoulder, softly, softly, at first, like a woman's breath, but then with the insistent sear of a malignant flame . . .

Boukman screamed—

Boukman awoke, eyes snapping open, instantly alert.

In the dim hut, the two slaves waving their fans moved like automata, set into a mindless function by Boukman's command. The morning sun tried to push its way through the thatch and around the edges of the door and bamboo, but mostly failed.

Boukman lay still, pondering The Dream. It had never gotten so close to him before, the thing that had chased him for nearly two hundred years. What did that mean? What was he to learn from this? He could only believe that things were coming to a climax soon, and that his actions from here on would have to be considered quickly, but executed flawlessly. Riding the edge of powerful magic gave a bokor great abilities, but there was always a danger of falling off. He had lived a long and full and rich life, master of his corner of the world, and the time, he felt, was coming soon whereupon he would expand his abilities beyond anything he had considered possible, or he would be harvested by the monster of his dreams. The edge along which he ran was sharp and narrow, and he had negotiated it with skill and élan for so long, he sometimes took his ability for granted. That would not do, now. To slip was to be sliced in half.

Ultimate power was just outside his grasp. He had to reach out for it, but he had to have a steady hand.

The smallest mistake now would be worse than death.

Much worse.

## **TWENTY-FIVE**

THEY HEADED BACK to the open rock close to the cliff's edge, and for almost an hour the going was pretty easy. Then they came to a spot where a huge section of the cliff had fallen away, a hundred yards or so, taking the path all the way to the forest. Beyond this avalanche, the cliff soared, higher than they were now by another hundred feet. Even if they circled the rock-slide, they would have to climb the rotten cliff.

Not going any farther in that direction.

Damn.

They'd have to go back into the jungle and find more animal trails or start hacking their way through the brush.

Indy could feel the sense of tension, of being pursued, and everybody was on edge.

A fast-moving scud of tattered, dirty-gray clouds appeared in the blue sky not long after they started, and by now the sun was mostly blocked, the hard-edged shadows gone fuzzy and dim. A herald wind began, cooler than the fetid jungle air had been, if not by much. Even Indy could smell the approaching rain.

"Storm comes," Batiste said. "Soon the wind will start to blow hard and the rain will come at us sideways. It will be impossible to track us in such weather, but we will have to move slower ourselves. Mixed blessing, this. Best we move quickly while we can. It will get bad soon."

It was only forty-five minutes or so later when the first drops began to fall, pelting hard enough to sting Indy's eyes, making a sound like fine gravel thrown into the trees. Wind whipped the branches and canopy. Leaves tore loose and flew past, swirled away in the tempest.

"We must stay on the pigs' trail!" Batiste said, yelling to be heard above the increasing downpour. "There will be some kind of shelter along it that the pigs sometimes use."

"I hope they won't be using it now!" Indy yelled back.

The rain and wind grew fiercer, and visibility dropped to a few feet. Batiste led the way while Mac brought up the rear; in the middle with Marie and the other men, Indy could not see more than a few yards. The wind seemed to be behind them at the moment, which was a small blessing, but it kept trying to take his hat, and Indy had to jam it down hard on his head to keep it from flying off. Bad for the shape,

that. He'd have to spend another week's salary to get it spruced up when he got home.

*If he got home . . .*

Yamada was yelling something at him, and Gruber was unable to hear most of it in the wind and rain. He did catch the word "typhoon," and while he had never been through one of those, this was a storm that seemed much worse than any he had experienced in the Caribbean so far. Wind had to be blowing at thirty or forty knots, gusting to fifty or sixty. Stand up too straight at the wrong moment, it would knock you sprawling.

Yamada leaned in. "It will get worse!" he yelled. "We have to find shelter or risk being crushed by falling trees!"

"We will lose them!" Gruber yelled back.

"No! They can't move any faster than we can! And if we die in the forest trying to catch them, that is unacceptable!"

The man had a point, Gruber had to concede. Being squashed by a falling tree would not serve to collect their quarry, who would certainly be having the same thoughts about shelter.

As if to punctuate the thought, a branch as big around as his leg fell not two meters away, hit the ground with a muddy splash, and then was pushed and tumbled away by the slashing wind.

Gruber had a cousin who had been a logger in the Black Forest. His cousin had been killed by a falling branch while cutting trees. Widowmaker, they called those things . . .

"We need something to block the wind!" Gruber yelled. "A rock wall, a cave!"

"Best we find such quickly, Doctor!" Yamada said.

Boukman woke again to the sound of rain. He stood, shook himself to loosen the stiffness in his joints, and moved to the hut's door.

The wind drove the rain over the ground in sheets; it looked like rippling grass. The trees whipped back and forth, leaves tearing free, filling the air with bits of greenery. The hurricane-loa would be rejoicing, for this had the feel of a big storm.

Boukman had lost count of how many such whirling monsters he had endured. Some years, there were none; some years, two, three, even four of them, raging against the land, flattening trees and houses, throwing boats onto houses nearly a kilometer inland. He had been through the eyes of these beasts a dozen times, felt his ears pop as the wind and rain died, seen the stars above with no clouds to block them

before the wind came back from the other quarter.

Fierce monsters, these tempests.

They were part of the cycle here, the big storms, and while many structures were swept away each time one of them stomped ashore, there were places that had been standing for two hundred years. Normally, Boukman would be inside one of those places—on Haiti, he had a low-walled stone house with heavy Spanish roof tiles that shrugged off the wind and rain the way a pelican did a drizzle. Even on this tiny island, there were places like that, and he would have to go to one of them, to protect this body, until he could collect the talisman he sought. And now, before the wind grew much worse.

To the two slaves with fans, he said, “Put those down and come. Stand between me and the wind.”

He was stronger. Not as strong as he would wish, but he would have to make do—hurricanes brought many dangers, and those who had his talisman would be at risk. He would have to do something about it. As soon as he had his body in a place where it would be safe.

In the far jungle, Boukman chose the strongest of the potion-slaves, one who had been a cane cutter, and he sent his spirit into this horse and took control of it.

It was but the work of a few minutes to find others, then order them to collect their brothers and sisters for the attack.

Even inside such as he was, his slaves knew who he was.

An hour later, all those in the area were returned to where Boukman’s drugged human horse stood, the rain and wind lashing at them and the trees.

“We go to fetch the talisman,” he said. “Follow me.”

He could not see Marie’s spirit-cord. Perhaps the energies of the storm extended into the Other Realm and hid it, but it did not matter. His slaves had marked their prey in this realm, and Boukman knew what his horse knew.

Boukman led the band along the animal trail. Marie and her *imen blan* were only half an hour’s march, even in the foul weather, and once he got there with the eighteen other slaves, it would take only a few moments to overwhelm them and collect their trophy. He would direct the attack—he had much experience in such matters, going back over most of his two hundred years. He knew where to put his troops to best advantage—living a long time gave you plenty of opportunity to test out theories. One thing he had learned was that patience always led intent. Not because it took extraordinary skill, but because being in exactly the right place at the right time made all the

difference.

The strongest of men would trip over a small foot, placed just so as he ran past. Smooth was better than rough.

They were drawing nearer their destination, and Boukman was ready to survey the situation, see what he needed, then to order his slaves into position.

He sent two of them to look.

There was a break in the rain. The wind continued in fits, but it was no longer pouring like a waterfall. For a while—the rain would return soon enough. Maybe by then, he would have his prize and be on the way home.

While he was waiting for them to report back, his horse began to buck—

Boukman frowned. What was this? He could feel the *âme* of the slave rising, trying to reassert control of the body they shared.

*Go back to sleep!*

*Who are you? Get out of me!*

Boukman felt a surge of anger. *I will kill this body! Go back to sleep!*

But—no. The man who had lived here until Boukman's potion had taken his will and submerged it so deep it was nearly extinguished had, somehow, broken free of the chemical bindings.

Of a moment, Boukman realized how it had happened: This slave had been too long from maintenance—he had not drunk of the potion in some time, perhaps weeks, and the effect had begun to wear off. Somehow, this one had been left on his own and the drug not administered when it should have been.

Boukman had his regulations in place, he had a method he'd used ever since he had developed the powers of a bokor and first mixed the potion and used it. Somehow, this one had slipped through the normal net.

It happened. Not often, but a man as busy as he was sometimes lost track of minor things—

*Out! Out of me! Leave, demon!*

The horse's owner began praying.

This was the wrong time, the worst moment for a minor mistake to show up. The man's spirit was strong—too strong to squash from inside the same body without the Potion to help. Boukman would have to leave, find another host, but his strength had not returned fully, and he could not risk trying it and failing. He would have to depart, retreat to his own form, regather his strength, and come back!

Damnation! Why did the gods task him so?

The prey would leave with his prize, and he would have to find them again!

In that moment of weakness, being pressed by the owner of the horse he rode, Boukman made a choice. It was not the patient and considered decision he would normally have made, but he deemed it worth the risk.

“Attack them!” he said. “Go, kill them, collect the box, and bring it to me! Now!”

It was not so much a risk. The odds were in his favor. Chances for success were good, based on numbers alone—

And with that, he leaped free of the chemically bound horse he rode. What the man who regained control would do didn’t matter. He meant nothing. He would find and deal with him later.

Boukman flew, cursing to himself as he went.

They came out of the jungle just after the rain got cranked up again, and the panicked yell of one of the bearers alerted Indy and the others to the danger:

*Zombis!* A dozen, fifteen—more—!

Indy pulled his revolver.

Head shots were difficult, but Indy had spent enough time practicing with his Webley that he knew what it would do. The .455 round wasn’t a tack driver—you weren’t going to be knocking walnuts off a fence post at a hundred yards—but at close range, a few yards, he could hit a head-sized target most of the time. And it was faster to reload than his old Smith Hand Ejector II had been.

Even in a pouring rain, you didn’t need to be a crack shot when the head-sized target was shambling in a straight line right at you and only a few yards away—

Indy fired, and was gratified to see the approaching *zombi*’s head splatter, followed by a boneless collapse onto the wet ground.

More of them headed at him. He fired, two, three, four, five, six—

Three more collapsed—

Some of the bearers were shooting, some using machetes. They were making a lot of noise, screaming loudly. Men fell. More *zombis* did, too

---

Next to him, facing the other way, both Mac and Batiste were shooting their weapons to similar effect. Of the score or so attackers who had swarmed them, at least eight or ten were down—

Indy’s gun was empty. He snapped the top-break weapon open, which automatically ejected the empties. They seemed to fall in slow

motion to splash into a puddle at his feet . . . Quickly he began to reload the cylinder. He managed to drop one of the replacement cartridges, but hurriedly fished another one from his jacket pocket and jammed it into the chamber—

He noticed in the middle of all the ado a rivulet run down the brim of his hat and onto his nose. How odd that he would focus on that . . .

Marie, next to him, mumbled some kind of invocation. Indy couldn't tell if it was doing any good, though—

He snapped the revolver closed, swung the gun around, and fired at another attacker—

Just as he pulled the trigger, the creature lurched, slipping on the soaked earth, and Indy's shot missed—

He stroked the trigger again—this time the shot found its mark, and the thing fell—

Here was another one—Indy fired twice more, got it—

Behind him, Batiste said something that sounded like a curse, and added, "*Bloque!*"

A jam. His rifle had jammed—!

To Indy's right, a *zombi* fell on one of the bearers. More screams. A second bearer leaped at the fallen pair, swinging his machete—

Indy's field of fire was, for the moment, clear. He spun as Batiste dropped the rifle and drew his machete—

*Why not the handgun at his hip?* Indy had time to wonder.

Indy couldn't get a clear shot at the things charging from that direction. "Mac! Move over!"

Mac took a step to his left, continuing to fire his little pistol. That move gave Indy an incoming target. He lined up the sights—

Batiste yelled and charged the two attackers closest to him, but his body blocked Indy's target. Indy jerked his weapon down to point at the ground—

"Batiste! Move—!"

But Batiste was in a full sprint. He swung the machete and caught one of the attackers just above its left ear. The zombie was a large fellow, but the cut took off the top of his head as if it were a cantaloupe, and the *zombi* fell, no blood from the cut, none—

Unfortunately, the thing's fall was not straight down. It had enough momentum that it slammed into Batiste. It wasn't a threat, but its weight was enough to knock the guide down. As Batiste struggled to get up, one of the remaining bearers panicked. The man yelled and pointed his rifle at the fallen pair.

"Don't—" Indy yelled. "The *zombi* is dead!"

Well, yeah. It was, but that's not what Indy meant—  
The bearer fired. Worked the bolt of his weapon, fired again—  
The first bullet hit the *zombi* in the back.

The second bullet hit Batiste as he struggled to his knees. The round took him dead-center in the chest. Batiste fell—

A *zombi* leaped on the bearer and bore him down, teeth sunk into the man's throat—

Mac ran closer, pointed his pistol down, fired off the remainder of his magazine into the *zombi*'s head. It released the bearer, but too late for him, his throat gushed red—

"I'm empty!" Mac yelled. "Cover the left—!"

Indy turned and saw three more *zombis* coming in, a tall, thin, pale-skinned male with red hair; a shorter, heavyset darker one, a female; and one in such bad condition that he couldn't tell what it had been in life, man or woman—

The tall one was closer. Indy got a quick sight picture, stroked the trigger—*easy, easy, don't jerk it!*—and the redhead fell.

He lined up on the woman . . . fired—got her!

He swung his revolver to cover the last one, still twenty feet away—squeezed off the shot—

*Click!*

It really was the loudest sound in the world. Either a dud or it was empty—how many had he shot?

Never mind! Indy dropped the gun, grabbed the slip-knotted cord holding his whip to his belt, and pulled it free. He cleared the coiled leather to his right and whirled the plaited whip overhead at the *zombi* as it moved into range—

The lash caught it across the face, sliced it open as if the tip had been a knife. Got its attention—it turned its head to look at Indy as he pulled the whip back for another strike—

This time he didn't try for a cut, but twisted his wrist and came at the thing horizontally—

The end of the whip wrapped around the thing's neck—

Indy jerked, hard, and it stumbled forward and sprawled into the puddles facedown—

Indy ran to where it was trying to get up. Pulled his machete, aimed for the middle of its head, and swung as though he was trying to split a log with an ax—

It made a sound like a hollow gourd being hit with a baseball bat—

Mac fired his pistol again, one-two-three-four-five! and Indy turned to see the last of the attackers collapse.

They had stood them off, but at a great cost. All the bearers were down, gone or dying, Batiste among them.

Only Marie, Mac, and Indy were still standing.

He unwrapped the end of his whip from around the motionless thing's neck. Coiled the leather absently as he looked around.

This was bad. Could be worse, but still bad.

In the stone house on the highest part of the island, Boukman awoke, still cursing. Had he been able to stay on his mount, he could have directed the attack, could have taken them!

But without his guidance, the slaves had simply charged en masse, no attempt at stealth. Of course. They had no fear.

A mistake.

Now he could feel that most of his force was down. The True Risen who had fallen would not be able to stand again; the potion-slaves might be useful, some of them who weren't too badly damaged, but he would have to animate them. He could not manage that now, given his current state. He would have to do something to give himself power—risky, but it must be done. Even so, he would have to turn all his energy in this direction, focus it, and everything else in his realm would suffer. There was no help for it. It must be done. Must be.

"Did you hear?" Yamada asked.

"Yes," Gruber answered. "Gunfire."

"It must be the Englishman and American's party."

"Shooting at our spies?"

Yamada shook his head. "I think not. Too many shots. The things in the forest. The *gaki*."

Gruber nodded. Yes, that was possible. But—what did it mean? What did those things want?

"We should go and see. The situation might have changed materially."

Yamada nodded.

## **TWENTY-SIX**

INDY LOOKED AROUND, and they quickly took stock—wasn't much to that chore:

The three of them were the only ones left alive.

Were there more of the *zombis*, real or chemical, around? Had they gotten them all?

Marie could not say. She had been trying to control them, but Boukman had protected them. She did not have enough magic to break through his wards.

Mac moved about and collected odds and ends, including a coil of rope, and more food and water. He picked up one of the rifles, hefted it, then put it back down.

Indy got that—if pistol bullets to the head would do the trick, then a rifle was just one more item to carry. Rifles were superior weapons, no question, but better to leave it and haul something more useful—whatever that might be in this particular situation . . .

The rain and wind started and stopped, pouring, then not, then blowing and raining again, and the breeze was definitely getting stronger. They needed to find somewhere else to shelter—this place was marked. If there were still *zombis* about, they would probably show up here. And there were the Japanese and the Germans. If they had heard the shooting over the wind and rain, they might be thinking about dropping by, too.

They were on the southeastern end of the island, and they needed to head north and west to get back to the village. If they followed the shore and kept it on their left, that would handle the western part, and that would mean north would be to their right. But if they didn't keep within sight of the ocean, which was already the case and going to stay that way as they started north, the heavy cloud cover wouldn't let them use the sun or stars for reckoning.

Indy dug into his backpack, fishing for something he knew was there somewhere . . .

Ah.

He came up with a small compass. Showed it to Mac, who nodded.

"We want to head that way," Indy said, pointing. "And find us a big tree or something to block the wind!"

Marie had moved to Batiste's fallen body. She knelt and spoke a few

words over it, made the sign of the cross. A final blessing, Indy figured. A shame, he had been a good man. Best they got moving so they didn't join him . . .

Yamada, sword drawn, followed the two scouts, Suzuki next to him, his own blade bared.

They came into the sheltered area, which partially blocked the wind and rain because there was a slight rocky rise on the west side.

The place was littered with bodies. More than a score of them.

It did not take long to determine that none of them was the Englishman, the American, or the woman.

Suzuki said, "They know the trick to stopping them." He pointed with his katana's tip.

Yes, the downed *gaki* had been shot or cut on the head.

Gruber said, "Helmets."

It took Yamada a moment to understand it. Ah, yes. If their soldiers took this drug and were able to protect their heads from attack, they would be virtually immune. Yamada had always wondered why Achilles had not worn stout boots, with the heels sheathed in iron. It would not have taken a particularly bright man to come up with that thought. Perhaps if you were spear- and sword-proof, you didn't have to be particularly bright . . .

"The three we want aren't here," Gruber observed. "They cannot have gotten far."

"But which way did they go?" Yamada said. "We cannot find a trail in this." He waved his sword at the driving rain.

"Northwest," Gruber said. "If they want to reach the place where their boat came ashore, they must eventually go that way."

"Eventually is not now," Yamada said.

"If we cannot catch them from behind, then we might be able to get there before them," Gruber said.

Yes. That was true—but: "We are not the only ones after them."

"There is nothing to be done about that. Besides, it looks as if they have dealt with that problem." He waved at the corpses.

Gruber had a point.

A tree behind them creaked in the wind. The tree gave up the fight and fell, ripping the ground up as the root-ball tore loose.

"It is still dangerous!" Yamada yelled. "We should find shelter."

"Agreed!"

They moved out of the battlefield, leaving the dead behind them.

Twenty minutes away, the three of them found a big tree that offered some respite against the wind and rain. The tree seemed to be some kind of tropical hardwood, gnarled and sturdy looking, a baobab tree, maybe, but Indy couldn't be sure. Did they even grow here?

Well, whatever the species, it had been here for a couple of hundred years and was still standing. Maybe it would survive this.

They tucked themselves in close to it, and it stopped enough of the weather so they weren't under constant bombardment by the wind and rain.

This couldn't go on forever. They'd wait it out if they had to, or at least until it slackened some.

Of a moment, the rain seemed to ease up. That was good—

There was a sudden silence, only a heartbeat or two long, and then an ominous roaring noise.

Mac said, "What is *that*? Sounds like a bloody train!"

Indy shook his head. No trains in the jungle. "A tornado!"

They didn't get many of those in England, Indy knew, but he had seen a few connected to thunderstorms in the United States, and he knew that hurricanes and typhoons often spawned the whirlwinds as they made landfall. Smaller but fiercer versions of the big storm that birthed them. A hurricane might flatten some of the trees and blow houses down, but a tornado was like a sickle through dry wheat—it mostly cleared a path—

The rain returned with a vengeance, and the terrible sound of what had to be a tornado was getting louder fast.

There was no place to go.

"The rope!" Indy yelled. "We have to tie ourselves down!"

That was a danger, being plucked up from the ground and carried away. Indy had heard stories of people being snatched from the ruins of their houses and tossed half a mile by the spinning winds. More of a danger was being hit by debris inside the tornado, where even a straw could, with enough velocity, be turned into a deadly spear—

Lightning flashed, a sudden blast of brightness against the gloom, and thunder crashed half a second behind it. Close—

The wind began to blow harder, leaves and branches spinning past.

The tree's trunk was too big for their rope to go around and leave them enough to work with, but there were a couple of thick roots that arced free of the soil, there—

Quickly, Indy looped the rope through the larger of the roots, as big around as his leg. He ran one end through his belt and passed it to Marie. "Tie it around yourself!"

Mac was already working with the other end.

The roar of the tornado blotted out anything else they might have said, but Indy waved them down. Lying prone, they would present less for the wind to catch and lift.

The world turned black and the noise grew even louder.

Facedown in the mud, Indy wondered if this was the last thing he would feel in this world. He gripped his hat to his head with both hands. If he survived and he let the wind take the fedora, he'd probably never find it again . . .

It was like being next to a plane's propellor, only worse.

Small objects smacked into Indy's back, pocking like popcorn. Something slightly larger bounced off his hip, *ow!* that hurt!

He felt himself starting to slide along the ground, moving in little hops as he bounced like a ball, the wind catching him, losing him, catching him again.

He pulled his knees in tight, used his interlaced fingers to draw his head closer to his body, and curled into a fetal position as the wind nudged him onto his side.

His belt went taut, and he felt himself sliding along the rope as if held by a giant's insistent hand: *Come with me, it said. Now!*

He stopped when he arrived at the end of the line that was tied around Marie. She wrapped arms and legs around him and held on tightly. He grabbed his hat in one hand, let go with the other, and used it to encircle Marie. Nearly face-to-face they bobbed up, cleared the muddy ground, then fell back down. The water that had puddled on the earth was gone, blown away. He felt the rope straining, could feel the vibration, could hear the sound of the rope thrumming as might the string of a musical instrument—

Would his belt break? Would the rope? Would the tree fall?

He couldn't catch his breath, so fast was the wind rushing past his face. He tucked his cheek into the hollow of Marie's throat and managed to draw in air as he labored to breathe.

Odd what a man notices when he is close to death—she had a musky, pleasant smell—

He heard wood cracking under the wind's force, felt rather than saw something big rush past, missing them by inches—

If it got any stronger, it would be all over—

And then, the wind slowed. A heartbeat . . . three more . . . yes, definitely it was easing up . . .

The tornado went on its way, heading to the northwest, clearing a path in front of itself like a steamroller . . .

A few seconds later and the driving rain began to fill the empty hollows the wind had cleared. The near pitch blackness lightened enough for him to see that Mac was no more than a few feet away, the wind having dragged him along the same path.

The wind eased yet more. Enough for Indy to yell, “Mac! You all right?”

“Never better!” Mac hollered back.

“Marie?”

“I am fine.” She released her grip on him, and reluctantly he did the same. He slid back a bit along the rope so that there was a bit of space between them.

“It appears that we have dodged another bullet, old sod. Dame Fortune smiles on us yet again.”

Well, they were still in the middle of a hurricane with all kinds of people in the forest who wanted them in the worst way, but yeah.

Indy nodded. Sooner or later, Dame Fortune was going to turn her smile elsewhere—you couldn’t have it forever—but this had been a big favor on her part. Luck had favored him more than a few times, and he was happy to accept that. Better to be lucky than good . . .

The good thing? The tornado had created for them a walkway, and it was going in the right direction . . .

## **TWENTY-SEVEN**

**B**OUKMAN CONSIDERED his choices, but he could see no better one, and so he invoked Papa Legba, the Master of the Crossroads. This was nothing out of the ordinary, for Papa Legba was both the first and last called upon in heavy magic—he was the Gatekeeper, and contact between human and loa went through him. He controlled the access between the real world and the Other Realm.

Papa Legba was usually revealed as a little old man who smoked a pipe, wore a broad-brimmed hat, and leaned on a cane.

He generally walked with dogs. They revered him, for he was their patron and protector. Abuse a dog, and sooner or later Papa Legba would find you and make you pay. Might be tomorrow, might be fifty years, but find you he always would.

Everybody knew this much about Papa Legba. But it was not so well known that he could and did borrow bits of mojo from every loa who passed through his gate. Not much, and the loa didn't miss it—if you have millions, you do not miss a few pennies, but after many centuries those small bits from tens of thousands of crossings added up. Papa had amassed strength beyond most. He was not a god, but he could do things that most loa could not. For what each loa had, Papa Legba had, too. Not as much, but more than anyone probably knew.

Boukman approved of dogs. He had never been overly harsh with any that he owned, and he had never—not once—kicked a dog in anger. In many ways, dogs were better than people, and Boukman respected this. It was his best calling card, and he needed to use it.

So he called upon Papa Legba, but instead of asking him to open the Gate, he bowed his head thrice and called his name each time. A request for something other than normal business.

Energy swirled and darkness flowered with multicolored light, washing away the world . . .

The place approaching the Beyond where Boukman found himself was not the usual one where Papa Legba stood in front of a massive iron gate as high as an elephant's eye with bars as thick as a man's arm. No, this time the gate was but a short wooden affair in the middle of a chest-tall fence, and Papa sat on a three-legged stool in front of it, smoking his pipe and tossing tidbits of something bloody to the three black and white dogs who lay at his feet. The dogs were short, stubby-legged things, pointed ears, white-tipped tails and feet,

bigger than terriers but smaller than chowchows.

The dogs heard or smelled Boukman's spirit approaching.

They turned to look at him.

Here was the test. If they growled, if the hair went up on their backs, if they barked and showed their teeth, he was in trouble . . .

After a moment, their tails began to wag, though they didn't leave Papa Legba's feet.

The old man drew on his pipe, blew out a cloud of red smoke, and smiled. "The dogs like you," he said. "Speak."

Boukman offered the old man a low bow. "I am weak, Papa, and there is a task for which I must be stronger."

The Gatekeeper nodded. "I can offer you strength—what your form can tolerate. Not as much as once it could, but some."

"I would be in your debt."

Papa nodded, acknowledging this. After a moment, he said, "There are too many strays," he said. "Poor creatures with no home, no food, no one to scratch behind their ears, to spell away their fleas."

"I could build a shelter," Boukman said. "A roof against the sun and rain, with food and water, run by boys who like to scratch dogs behind the ears. A place where fleas will fall off and die and where all strays would be welcome."

The old man smiled. Blew out another cloud of red. He nodded. "That would be a good thing, such a place, hey, dogs?"

The dogs wagged their tails faster.

He waved his pipe in Boukman's direction. "Strength you shall have. Such that you are able to use."

Boukman bowed. "Thank you, Papa."

The old man looked at the three dogs, then back at him. "You are evil as men go, Boukman. I have seen many, and I know—there are few who approach your infamy. But a man, even an evil one, who likes dogs? That man can be worth something to me. Go. I will look forward to the shelter you build."

Boukman bowed again.

\* \* \*

When he awoke this time, Boukman felt better than he had in months. Strong, fit, full of vigor. Yes, it was magical strength, and if he misused it, it could kill him—his body had been healed and made stronger, but it was still old by any human standard, and even magic could only protect it from so much. He didn't need a whole lot, only enough to collect the talisman. After that, he would remake himself—

a body completely reborn, perhaps even a new one entirely. With enough power, with enough care, almost anything was possible.

After he collected the talisman, he would be, one way or the other, a new man.

Boukman's *âme* stood in the middle of the carnage the *imen blan* had left behind. With his new strength, he focused his energy, channeled it, and poured it into the corpses at his feet.

It was like standing under a waterfall—magic rushed through and over him like a raging torrent, spewing, filling the dead at his feet with ersatz life.

They began to judder and bounce about on the wet ground, the bodies. Like sparks struck from flint by steel, some of them took life, some did not. The recently killed stirred: those who had been under the spell of the potion, and those who had been in the party of the *imen blan*. Took life, these did, shook themselves, and stood, empty, soulless husks now his to command.

Papa Legba had been generous in his gift. Boukman would have to build a grand shelter for dogs in return, but that was of small importance now.

Fifteen zombies attained their feet and stood, some of them swaying to an unheard rhythm, waiting for Boukman's order. And he had energy left. He could raise this many more, he felt, and thirty would be more than he had been able to animate for eighty or ninety years. It was wonderful. More, this would be but a drop in the bucket compared with what he could do once he had the talisman, and was able to use it . . .

“Go and collect the *imen blan*,” he said. “And the woman with them. Alive. I want them all alive. I have use for them. Follow the path left by Papa Badé’s demon-wind.”

Obediently, the *zombis* shuffled into the rainy forest. The wind blew over them hard enough to whistle.

Boukman smiled. The gods had tasked him. Very well. He would overcome the obstacles needed to reach his goal. He had always done so before. He would do so now. It was only a matter of time.

The rain came, it stopped, it came back. The wind roared, slackened a bit, then gusted enough to make it impossible to stand erect. Gruber fretted about Jones and McHale, but he knew they would have no easier a time of it than he was having. To attempt to move about in the jungle during a storm of what seemed biblical proportions would be madness, and he didn't think the Englishman or the American was

completely insane.

Of course, after leaving the slaughterhouse floor, it might be that they were panicked into a mindless flight, preferring to be crushed by falling trees over having their throats ripped out. He could understand that.

Even over the thrum of wind and lashing rain, they heard a roaring noise that, to Gruber, sounded like a freight train rushing past only a few meters away.

The rain fell harder, and there was lightning and thunder to go with the new sound.

“*Tatsumaki!*” Yamada cried.

It was not a word in Gruber’s Japanese vocabulary. “What, another of your ghosts?”

“No. It is a whirlwind. In English, they say ‘tornado.’ ”

Ah. “*Windhosen. Trombe,*” Gruber said. “We have those sometimes during spring thunderstorms.”

The roar grew briefly louder, but then faded, until the rain and wind covered it again.

Yamada said, “Typhoons bring them, sometimes more than one. In my country, when I was a young man, a typhoon hit our prefecture. From a hill near my home, I watched four *tatsumaki* dance together through the fields, smashing flat all they touched. It was an amazing sight.”

“Well, this one seems to have missed us.”

“Yes. But we must hope that it also missed our quarry.”

Gruber blinked at that. Yes. Having them sucked up into a violent *trombe* and hurled out to sea? That would be bad.

“It is a large jungle! What are the chances?” Gruber said. He had to yell, for the wind had come back harder.

“Who can say?” Yamada ducked as a branch blew over his head, barely missing him.

Gruber put his own head down. None of this was to his liking.

\* \* \*

“I think we’ve got company!” Indy yelled.

“Where?” Mac said.

“Behind us! I thought I saw something move!”

“Indy, we are in the middle of a hurricane! *Everything* is moving!”

“Not against the wind, it isn’t!”

“Germans? Japanese? Zombis?”

“I didn’t get a good look.”

“Zombis,” Marie said.

He glanced at her, saw that her eyes were closed. “I can feel them. Almost as many as before . . . ah!”

“What?”

She shook her head. “It doesn’t matter. If Boukman can raise that many so quickly, he is even stronger than I knew. We must go faster!”

Indy didn’t need any prodding to agree with that.

They ran.

Well, as much as they could.

The tornado’s track wasn’t an easy walk—there were downed trees and branches, but there were gaps, and it was much faster than slashing their way through the jungle.

It wasn’t long before they came to an obstacle the tornado couldn’t help them with—a river.

The rain was still driving, and the river foamed and rushed past, full of leaves and branches and debris—

“Wait, have a look!” Indy said. “There!”

Mac and Marie looked.

“It’s a rope,” Mac said.

“Yes! Somebody has crossed here,” Indy said. “We can hand-over-hand using that line!”

“If we don’t get smacked by a fallen tree.”

“Would you rather wait for the *zombis*?”

Mac shook his head. No, he didn’t want to do that.

“I’ll even go first,” Mac said.

They hurried down to the riverbank, slipping and sliding in the mud. Well. They were about to get a bath . . .

It wasn’t the most fun Indy had ever had—it was tough on his hands, and his shoulders, back, and stomach all ached, too, by the time he crawled onto the opposite shore behind Marie. As soon as Indy achieved the muddy bank, Mac pulled his machete out and cut the rope loose from where it was tied to a tree. The river streamed the cut rope across itself toward the other side.

“That ought to help,” Mac said.

“It will slow them only a little,” Marie said. “They will swim across, and most of them will make it. They cannot drown.”

“Anything we can get, we’ll take,” Indy said.

## **TWENTY-EIGHT**

**G**RUBER AND YAMADA looked at the fast-flowing river. “This is where we crossed before,” Yamada said. “See there, the rope.”

“For what good it does us,” Gruber said.

One of Yamada’s men approached, bowed, and, from what Gruber could gather of his conversation, offered to attempt to swim across and reattach the rope.

“*Iie*,” Yamada said, in Japanese. “We will look for another way.”

The soldier bowed.

Gruber looked at him as if he did not understand any of what had passed between them. “What?”

“My soldier has offered to try to swim across and retie the rope. As island people, we are good swimmers, but that would cost me a man I cannot afford to lose, I think.”

Gruber looked at the river. “Yes, I believe you are correct.”

“There will be fallen trees in the water. Perhaps enough have gathered to form a dam or bridge. We should look for such.”

Gruber shrugged. Perhaps that was wishful thinking, but sending men into the raging water to drown wasn’t appealing, either. He wouldn’t mind if it served a higher purpose, of course, but he couldn’t see how it would in this instance.

Following the tornado’s path until it stopped abruptly more than a mile later, the trio found another animal trail. A couple of hours later, they reached the gorge they remembered from only a few days before. The rain had finally slackened some, though Marie said it would come back strong again. Yet, even after as much rain as they’d had, the gully had not been filled.

That seemed moderately impossible.

Indy said, “That must be one hell of a big tunnel below to drain that much water away that fast.”

“Yes, yes, fascinating,” Mac said. “Let’s keep moving!”

Marie shook her head. “We cannot keep up this pace.”

“Maybe if we cut the rope going up the slope—” Mac said.

“I can *feel* them behind us,” she said. “It didn’t work at the river—they draw closer as we speak. This slope won’t stop them.”

Indy looked at the bottom of the trench, at the fissure that ran its length. "I got an idea. Stay here."

Quickly he used the rope they'd left rigged on the way in to ascend partway up the steeper side of the narrow canyon. Twenty-five . . . thirty feet . . . that ought to do it. He pulled his machete out and hacked at the fiber just below where he had grabbed it. The sharp blade severed the sisal in one stroke, and the cut piece fell and slithered down the drenched slope.

Slithered, like a giant—

Don't even *think* the word, Indy . . .

"What are you *doing*?" Mac yelled.

"When they see this, they'll think we went this way and then cut the rope behind us!"

"Maybe. And maybe they split up, look for tracks, and trail us down the gully!"

Indy sheathed the machete and skidded and scuffed his way back down to where Marie and Mac stood. Indy bent, grabbed the rope, wrapped the center of it around his waist, and tied it in a square knot. He handed one end to Marie, the other to Mac.

"Link up," he said. "Just like during the tornado."

"What good is this going to—ah." Mac got it.

Marie didn't. "I don't understand."

"We can't move as fast as they can on foot. They might be able to track us on land."

"On land? Can you now fly? I don't—oh."

Mac was already knotting the rope around his waist. "We'll probably drown, you know. Or be dashed against the rocks at the drop to the sea like Batiste said."

"Maybe. But roped together, we might be able to snag something along the way and avoid the fall at the end. Or maybe the tide will be in."

"Rather iffy, Indy."

"Maybe we drown or go off the cliff, as opposed to for sure we get caught by the walking dead. If we hurry, they won't know which way we went."

Marie nodded. "You have a point." She quickly tied her end of the rope around her waist.

Indy took his hat off. "Sorry," he said to the hat. Then he used the awl on his pocketknife to punch a small hole in the hat and the leather sweatband. He ran a spare bootlace through the hole and tied the hat to his belt on the left side. Given all the rain, a little more water

wasn't going to hurt it, and this way he had a chance of keeping it. His hat guy could fix the hole, if Indy got home again.

"Leave anything you don't want to carry while swimming," he said. He hoped that the wooden boxes holding the Heart of Darkness would be buoyant enough to help keep his backpack from dragging him down.

Mac dumped out his own backpack, put a few things into his pockets. Held up his canteen, looked at it, grinned, and dropped it. "I doubt we'll have any trouble finding something to drink around here for a while!"

Marie shrugged out of her pack and let it fall. Indy had his gun, his whip, and his hat on his belt.

Together they edged down to a wide spot in the crack that sundered the bottom of the crevasse. "Ready? On three. One . . . two . . . *three* —!"

They jumped.

Indy was a strong swimmer, but the current in the huge underground river was so fast that even if he hadn't been roped to Marie and Mac, there was no way he'd be able to move against it. It wasn't huge, the river, but it was wide enough. He might make it to one side or the other, but there was no real shore as far as he could see in the dim light; it was like being in a railroad tunnel half filled with water. Nothing to climb.

There was enough of the afternoon's rainy light seeping down through the fissure above so it wasn't completely dark, though there were some stretches where the gloom was fairly thick.

The only good thing Indy could see was that the river was deep; there didn't seem to be any white water, or rapids, or rocks upon which to snag or get smashed. The sound of the river was contained by the enclosure, though, and it was too loud to hear anything but a full-out yell.

He could see Mac and Marie bobbing along with him, and both seemed to be treading water well enough to be able to breathe okay.

The river meandered, twisting into tight S-curves, then straightening for a bit before curving again. The scientist in him figured that this was due to the density of the rock; the softer material would probably have worn away faster than the harder stuff. It was easier to hollow out limestone than it was granite, but how long had this waterway been here? A million years? Ten million? No way to tell zipping along as fast as they were; they had to be going four, five miles an hour. Could be an old or mature river, given all the rain, but

it was a really fast flow. There must be a fairly steep grade in the equation somewhere . . .

Now and then, the rocky ceiling dropped lower, to a height of no more than a few feet. Fifteen minutes or so along, there was a gap in the wall high and to the right where a section had caved in, leaving a hole big enough to drive a truck through. The light was gray—it looked like another band of showers had arrived, and Indy saw rain coming in through the collapsed wall.

If this tunnel narrowed too much, it might be like the inside of a garden hose, completely filled to the walls, and that would be bad . . .

They came to a maelstrom, water whirlpooling widdershins like a giant bathtub drain. With all three of them paddling frantically, they managed to skirt the edge, barely.

They had little choice about where they were going.

Where it narrowed, the flow moved faster; where it widened, less fast, but slow it wasn't. The ride wasn't going to last long at this speed.

Bobbing like three corks, they flowed along the underground waterway.

As they passed under a wide gap in the ceiling, the gray light was bright enough for Indy to notice something swimming in the water not far away, going with the current.

Snakes—! Two, three of them—!

He cursed—

Mac and Marie didn't seem to hear him, and if the snakes did, they didn't let on.

Riding his human horse, Boukman cast around, trying to find some sign of Marie. They had not caught up with their prey, and that seemed odd. His *zombis* were faster, and even though they'd had to swim and climb, they should have overtaken them by now. The tornado's path had stopped when the funnel had lifted, and the going was slower after that.

Where where they?

Her *âme* and the cord that connected it to Heaven were nowhere to be found. He frowned. Unless she was dead—and there was no evidence of that—then the only way she could mask it was with a spell that, by rights, she should not have the power to use.

But—she had been exposed to the talisman when it had been dug up. Boukman had been there, and the same exposure, in his weakened state and inside a *zombi*, had nearly been the end of him. Marie was

young and strong, and . . . what if she had absorbed some of the talisman's vast energies?

He frowned at the notion, but it was one he had to consider seriously. Any mambo or houngan could work small magicks, like watering a plant with a mist sprayer. But if they had a firehose connected to an ocean? Oh, that could be a problem. Without some skill, some practice, attempting to use any major part of that kind of energy would kill them, it would blow them apart as a giant's breath would a child's balloon. If, however, they did not try to be greedy, if they tapped but a trickle, and did it with great caution . . . ?

No, Boukman didn't like this thought at all! The more Marie was exposed to the talisman, the greater her power would grow—if she did it carefully. And she was not stupid, his great-grandniece, he had already determined that. She would know. And to resist him, she would dare to draw energy from the talisman, even though it could well be worth her life if she made a mistake.

They had to find her, and they had to do it quickly, before she grew too strong.

Another risk, but one he had to take. He removed himself from the horse and flew above the island, searching. Finding her light was the only way, and if it cost him most of what Papa Legba had given him, so be it . . .

Floating high in the Other Realm, Boukman extended his senses, searching. He concentrated, narrowing his gaze, shutting out distractions. There were things in this realm that drew attention, and he could not allow them to draw his.

Focus, Boukman . . . Find her . . .

There! There, a glimmer!

Boukman forced power into his gaze, leaching it from his other senses. His hearing grew quiet. Taste, touch, smell, all faded as he reached, reached . . .

Yes! It was her!

But—she was moving too fast, faster than she could possibly walk in the jungle and in a fairly straight line toward the northern coast . . .

A river. They were in a river. They had a boat, or they swam, but that was the only explanation. The storm would flow all the waterways downhill to the sea, flooding as they went.

The Fleuve Caché, the Hidden River—he and his slaves had crossed it but a few minutes past. Yes.

Boukman flew into his horse.

“Back,” he said. “To the Fleuve Caché. They are in the underground waters. Go after them.”

He felt a pain in his chest. It was not the horse's body, he knew, but his *âme*. It had cost him to reach out for Marie. He had to rest. He could not go after them himself, it would be dangerous. To be so close and to fail would be unthinkable.

Unthinkable—but he had to keep it in mind. He wasn't ready to die—he had too many debts to be settled on the other side of life's gate . . .

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## **TWENTY-NINE**

THE TRIO rounded a hairpin curve. Just ahead lay a rock sticking up in the middle of the river. It was a jagged, sharp-edged spire a good six feet higher than the water. It looked like a giant, deformed shark's fin.

So much for the notion that the water wasn't shallow.

It would not do to hit that as fast as they were going.

"Rock! Look out for the rock!" Indy yelled.

Marie and Mac looked at him, and he pointed.

They saw it.

"This way!" Indy yelled. They needed to all be pulling in the same direction—

As they drew nearer, Indy saw that Mac would be far enough to the right to clear it; he might make it, but Marie was going to have to hurry—!

"Come on!" he called, trying to tow her along faster—

A swirl in the water in front of him startled Indy. Was it the snakes? He hadn't seen them in a while—he stopped swimming, just for a heartbeat or two, then realized they were almost at the spire—

Indy, following Mac, was swept past the rock on the right, barely clearing it.

Marie was on the left side. She missed colliding with it, thank God, but the rope hit, caught, and Indy felt himself moving toward the back of the rock, which was a good nine feet long. The rope pivoted him inward—

—until the rope parted!

He saw the cut end of the line pop into the air as the water swirled him past the impediment—

"Marie—!"

"I'm here!" she yelled. "I'm okay!"

He saw her, slightly behind him and ten feet away. The rope had been sliced apart, but she was okay. They would have to swim toward each other and tie the rope together, but they were okay.

"Indy! Look out!"

Indy turned and saw what Mac was hollering about—

That rock spire was obviously part a formation. Ahead and to the center of the river was a frothing, foamy patch of white water.

Something had to be close to the surface to cause it.

They didn't want to hit that. Aside from banging into whatever sharp rocks might be hidden just under the water, there was a chance of snagging a foot or leg and being shoved under to drown.

Indy started swimming hard toward Mac.

Marie went in the other direction.

It was close, but Indy managed to stay in the deeper water. The foam boiled up and blocked his view of Marie, and when he was past the white water—

Marie was gone!

"My men cannot find a trail," Gruber said.

"Nor mine," Yamada said.

They had followed along the path of the tornado, but the path ended and there were no signs of which way their quarry might have gone, if they had come this way at all.

The rain was not a complete deluge, but steady, and the wind still gusted enough to knock down trees and men alike.

This was hopeless, Gruber realized. Like trying to find a particular grain of sand in a bucket. A very wet and rocking bucket, at that.

"We should return to the village," Yamada said, echoing Gruber's unspoken thoughts. "If we move quickly, we can get there ahead of them."

Gruber nodded. Yes. His soldiers were excellent in the field, they could move faster than civilians, and he had to assume that Yamada's men were of like expertise. They could plot a course, they had compasses and would not need landmarks nor the sun to do so. "Let us move with all due speed," he said.

Catch them in the jungle, catch them at the village, it was the same either way, and since they didn't know where they were but did know where they were going, that was the most reasonable choice to be made here. It was not the way he would have chosen, but things had changed since they'd arrived here.

Slogging through a jungle during a hurricane wasn't going to be the easiest of hikes, but there was no choice.

The need for a physical body kept Boukman from getting ahead of Marie and her *imen blan*. Without a horse, he could not ride, and none of his slaves was in position. Even if he could take over or send somebody who might be able to motor to the end of the river to intercept them, it would do no good. On a sunny, calm day, a fast boat

might make it the length of the island in time.

It was not a sunny, calm day. No small boat would be safe offshore in a hurricane. He would have to hope that his *zombis* could catch up to them. Some things, no man could manage; it was up to the gods to decide.

Indy felt a surge of panic—and then a rush of relief—there she was! Marie had been swept toward the left side of the river, and was farther back than he expected.

“Marie! Are you okay?”

She didn’t answer, and she seemed to be in trouble. As he watched, her head went under.

“Marie!”

After a second, he saw her bob back up to the surface. She was struggling, but still treading water. Had she hit the side of that spire? Or a rock he hadn’t seen?

The river took another turn, and the light grew stronger.

Indy looked around. There was another big hole in the wall and roof ahead, and enough of the rubble from that collapse had spilled into the river to make a ragged ramp that offered a way out of the pipe.

Marie was closer to it, but Indy couldn’t tell if she saw that.

“Mac! This way!”

Indy put his face down and began to swim toward the opening. The rope connecting him to Mac went taut, then slackened a bit as Mac started paddling. If they could reach the shore made by the cave-in, they could climb up and out.

The drag of the backpack and his hat didn’t help. He was working hard, but not moving very fast.

Indy lifted his face from the water to breathe and saw that Marie was approaching the pile of rock and earth that projected from the tunnel wall into the river—yes, go for it!

The next time he came up for air, he saw that Marie was on the rocks, scrabbling from the water.

But the current was pulling Indy and Mac along very fast.

Indy dug in, swimming for all he was worth. For a second, he thought about jettisoning the backpack, but he would lose more time stopping to do that than he gained—

Mac couldn’t keep up. The rope went taut again, slowing Indy’s crawl stroke even more.

Marie, meanwhile, had gotten clear of the water, but had collapsed facedown on the bottom of the rubble pile. At least she wasn’t going

to drown—

The water's grip was too strong. As hard as he could paddle and kick, Indy realized that they weren't going to reach the finger of rock and dirt that stuck out into the water—

They swept past, missing by ten feet.

Trying to swim against the current was useless. After a few seconds, he gave it up.

The river carried them away from Marie. In a few seconds they reached another bend, and she was gone.

Another bend past that, and the noise inside the stone pipe grew louder, the river narrowed, and they began to speed up.

"This can't be good," Indy said.

"What?"

Indy shook his head.

Mac had managed to get closer to Indy, they were almost touching, but even so he had to yell loudly for Indy to hear him.

"I think we are coming to the end of the ride!"

"Way ahead of you, pal!"

A spray, fine and misty, filled the air. Another bad sign—that meant water was probably hitting something solid hard. There weren't any more rocks, no banks to climb onto, nothing to stop them that Indy could see.

The noise got louder. The mist thickened. The river flowed even faster—

—the ceiling ended. There was enough light to see pretty well now, and the river ahead of them—well. A hundred yards away, there wasn't any river ahead of them, there was only gray sky and the whitecaps of a storm-stirred sea.

Uh-oh.

Indy looked at Mac.

"Good luck, Jonesy—"

"Yeah, you, too—"

At home in his own body, inside a low structure built to withstand the winds of a major storm, Boukman rested. He was not asleep, but he was not altogether awake, either. He was hoping for a sign. Something that would offer the proper direction for him to take.

Outside, the hurricane raged.

## THIRTY

IN THE DREAM, Boukman heard something that he had never heard before. A voice, deep, melodious, and what it said was one word:

“Horse.”

Boukman awoke and sat up. The storm was passing—even through the walls, he could feel that the winds, though still howling, were weaker. Usually that was the way of them. The wind and rain would be fierce, and then the hurricane would pass by—a day, sometimes only a few hours, and the rain would be less, the wind dying down. Another day hence, and there might come a cloudless sky under a blazing sun, and save for the destruction and flood left behind, you would not know the storm had come at all—the sky would hold no memory of it.

*Horse.* What did that mean? Was he to offer himself to a rider? Or did he need to return to one of his mounts?

He could throw the bones. Or he could smoke the magic smoke. Either might give him more clarity.

Or he could just listen to his own inner voice. Ride? Or be ridden?

*Ride,* came the voice inside his head.

He took a deep breath. It would need most of the strength he had borrowed from Papa Legba to send his *âme* forth yet again. But a bokor who failed to heed his intuition usually regretted it.

Boukman gathered himself.

Indy looked around frantically for something—anything—that he might grab. Anything that he might reach with his whip—

But there was nothing—

And a moment later they were falling—

Boukman felt his *zombis* and potioned ones below him. They were in the river, floating along. He aimed himself at the strongest of the potioned risen—

—and was swimming, treading water, actually, carried along by the river. He didn’t see any reason to be here—

—and then he did.

Ahead, lying on a pile of rocks and earth to the left side of the

rushing river, was a figure dressed in khaki. She was lying sprawled on her face.

Marie.

Boukman's horse grinned for him. He didn't see the *imen blan*, but there was Marie, waiting to be collected. If she was alive, that was good. If not, he would bring her back and use her that way. Dead or alive, she would serve.

Boukman aimed his horse at the shore.

A minute later, he climbed from the river, as did four of his other slaves, two of them True Risen, two potioned ones. The others? Well, no matter.

Marie coughed and spewed up water.

Boukman laughed. Alive and warm was much the better.

The *imen blan* would not have climbed up and left her here, and the rope around her waist with the frayed end told him the story. They had come down linked, but the rope had been severed. The men must still be in the river, heading toward the cataract at the sea, a kilometer or so away.

"Go and find the *imen blan*," he said to the *zombis*. "Tell them I have Marie. If they want her to live, tell them to follow you. Bring them to the clearing at the sisal plantation. Go!"

Marie coughed again and managed to push herself up onto one elbow. She looked around, and saw Boukman's horse squatting next to her. Saw the *zombis* jump back into the water.

She looked at the horse.

"Boukman."

"In the flesh—though not my own," he said. He laughed. "Come, *petite* Marie. We will go for a walk in the rain together, you and I. If your friends are alive, they will join us eventually."

He saw her reach for a rock as big as her fist.

"Don't make me hurt you, little one. I can kill you and bring you back if I need to, you know."

She let the rock fall.

He laughed again.

Indy's life didn't flash before his eyes. The many times when he'd thought he was about to die, that had never happened, but the weightlessness he felt as he fell, surrounded by the falling water, seemed to last for a long time. Months, years, eons . . .

He couldn't see much, but he opened his eyes wide. He wanted to see the rock he smashed into—

## *Splloosh!*

Indy felt himself hit not rock, but water. He sank deep, ten or twelve feet, and stopped, then started to float upward.

The tide, apparently, was in.

As soon as he broke the surface and got a breath, he yelled, a wordless cry of victory.

A second later Mac popped up next to him, still connected by the rope. Grinning like a hyena he began to laugh.

“We bloody well made it in one piece!”

But the sea was roiling, wind and rain and river, falling into it, and they weren’t home safe yet. They started swimming aslant to the froth from the falling river, aiming for a shore that didn’t seem all that far away. Even so, it took them five minutes to make it.

The beach was more rock than sand, and not the most hospitable place in the rain and wind, with the breakers spewing foam, but it was, by God, better than drowning or being smashed on the rocks.

“This,” Indy said, when he managed to catch a breath, “is getting old, this swimming stuff.”

“I hear that,” Mac said. “I wonder if my cigarettes stayed dry?”

“The storm seems to be decreasing in intensity, don’t you think?” Gruber asked.

Yamada nodded. “Yes.” He was actually thinking about his scrolls and letters to his wife, back in the abandoned tent. Doubtlessly blown down and carried to who-knew-where by now. A shame.

“Make the going a little easier,” Gruber said.

*For our quarry, too,* Yamada thought, but there was no need to say that aloud. Gruber knew. They were going around the thickest brush when they could, cutting through when they couldn’t. The scouts would find animal trails and they’d follow those until it looked as if they would go the wrong way, then they’d strike out in the woods again. It was hard travel, but they were making progress in the right general direction. It was the best they could do.

Yamada entertained a small fantasy: Someday he would come back here with his grandchildren, and they would go on a hunt for the lost tent and the treasures it held, to prove that the stories he had told them were true. That, fetched up under a fallen tree that protected it from the rain and wind and harsh sun, they would find the rotting canvas, and inside, wrapped in the oilcloth, would be his scrolls. How delighted the grandchildren would be to see them!

Yamada smiled to himself. A small fantasy, but that was all it was.

The tent could have been snatched up by a tornado and shredded to bits, or blown all the way to the sea by now, to make a home for the fish a hundred fathoms down. And he would never inflict this place on his grandchildren. Maybe if it was made civilized, the trees cut down, roads laid, it would be a spot they could visit and peer at from behind the window of an automobile. *Why, Grandfather, this is not an awful jungle like you used to tell us about! It's not so bad at all!*

Ah, he would say in his old man's voice, *but you should have seen it fifty years ago . . .*

## **THIRTY-ONE**

INDY AND MAC were looking for a way to climb the rotten rock of the cliff, which was an easy hundred feet almost straight up, when something made Indy turn around and look at the sea.

It was not calm. The rain had slackened, the wind was noticeably less strong, and the tide, while still sending breakers close enough to splash over their feet now and then, seemed to be ebbing.

A man was wading ashore.

Indy knew it wasn't an ordinary man, and he reached for his revolver, unsnapping the sodden leather flap of his holster. He had the gun out and was bringing it up when the man raised one hand and held it palm-out in a *Stop!* gesture.

Mac was fishing for his own pistol. "Shoot him, Indy! My bloody gun is caught on something—!"

In French, the man called out, "Don't!"

He was big and heavy, the speaker. Must go 250, 260 pounds, Indy figured.

Indy brought the gun up and aimed at the man's head—

"Boukman says you must follow me."

"Like hell I will." He started to squeeze the trigger . . .

"He has Marie. Come to him, or she dies."

Indy eased up on the trigger.

The rain had stopped, though water still dripped from the trees enough so it didn't seem all that much of an improvement. The wind still gusted hard now and then, but was definitely dwindling, Gruber thought.

As they curved around a hairpin turning in the animal trail upon which they had been traveling for the last half an hour, Gruber heard several things in quick succession: a yell—in Japanese—some squealing and grunting, and two shots.

He pulled his Luger—

Next to him, Yamada drew that long sword of his and gripped the handle in both hands—

He felt the ground vibrating, heard more of the grunting, getting louder—

"Off the trail!" one of the Japanese soldiers yelled.

Yamada and his captain leaped into the brush to the right, and Gruber did the same to his left, along with his remaining man.

A moment later a herd of pigs came into view, slogging and splashing through the mud and puddles on the trail, heading in their direction. There were twelve or fifteen of them, the biggest of them waist-high and probably 150 kilograms.

The pigs thundered past, never slowing.

Once they were gone, the men worked their way out of the brush. Gruber had gotten a nasty scratch from a branch on his left arm, it was bleeding freely, but otherwise he was uninjured.

Ahead on the trail, Gruber's outwalker was down, being attended to by the Japanese scout. Gruber and Yamada both hurried to the fallen man.

There was a pig nearby, a bristly hog heavier than a man, shot dead.

As Gruber examined the fallen soldier, the Japanese scout gave a report to Yamada. Gruber caught parts of it, but it was obvious what had happened. They had come across the herd of pigs, which had been sheltering under a toppled tree whose crown had provided respite from the weather. The ground was all trodden down and muddy, a wallow. The animals had been startled. They had charged, the men had shot, but the fallen man had been knocked down and trampled. He was barely conscious, in pain, and a quick examination revealed broken ribs, what was likely a punctured lung, and almost certainly internal bleeding. They were a long way from an operating room or anybody skilled enough to save him.

The German soldiers all carried first-aid kits, bandages, and drugs that might be necessary on a battlefield.

"Give him a morphine injection," Gruber said to his last remaining soldier. "Four grains."

The soldier blinked. "Four grains? But, Doctor—"

"Do as I say!"

Gruber stood and gave Yamada a quick jerk of his head.

The two doctors moved away.

Yamada said, "He needs major surgery."

"Yes. And he'll be dead long before we can carry him that far."

Yamada nodded. "Four grains, yes."

With that much, the man's breathing would slow and eventually stop. It would be a painless death. He would simply go to sleep and never wake up. Regrettable, but under the circumstances Gruber could

see no option. Trying to carry the injured soldier would require making a litter, and the use of such a thing in the jungle where trails were narrow or nonexistent? For a man who, at best, would survive a few more hours? No.

Gruber moved back to the downed man. Already the morphine was starting to take effect. "Hurst," Gruber said. "Can you hear me?"

"Jah, Colonel."

"We are going to knock you out, to keep you from feeling the pain when we move you. When you wake up, you will be in a better place, do you understand?"

"Jawohl, Herr Doktor. I understand."

"You're a good man, Hurst."

The man closed his eyes.

After another minute, Gruber said, "Move him off the trail."

Gruber's soldier and one of the Japanese men did so.

Yamada nodded at Gruber. "War forces us to make hard choices, Doctor," he said.

Gruber nodded. "It does." He was down to one man and himself now. Not looking good, but it was what it was.

They moved out.

To the man, whatever was left of him in there, Indy said, "I hope you know another way to get up this cliff, because if we fall and die, Boukman probably won't be real happy with you."

The big man, who wore only a pair of ragged green pants, appeared to be about forty, with long and tangled black hair and dull brown eyes. He said, "Wait."

Indy and Mac exchanged glances. "For what?"

"Wait." He looked out into the still-roiling sea.

Indy looked that way, too. Nothing to see but waves and—

Hold on a second—

There was a dark spot on the surface of the water, a hundred yards out. It looked like a coconut or some-such floating there, but as Indy watched, it rose from the water, and attached to it was, was—it took a couple of seconds for it to register.

It was a man. Walking toward the shore, his head and shoulders rising from the water as it got shallower.

When the water was only waist-deep on the figure, Indy saw that he was carrying a large rock clasped to his belly, the size of a suitcase; it must have weighed a hundred pounds or more.

Indy looked at Mac, who got it at the same time. "Ballast," Indy said. "So he doesn't float away. Amazing. He's using the rock so he can walk on the bottom."

A moment later, a second figure began to rise from the sea.

If there had been any doubt before that they were dealing with living humans, this would have erased it.

Another couple of minutes, and the two *zombis* arrived on the shore. They dropped the rocks they were carrying and stood still and silent, looking at the one who had spoken to Indy and Mac.

"We must climb up," Green Pants said to the *zombis*. "Make us a way."

As they watched, the first *zombi*—a man who had probably been in his twenties when alive, dressed in a blue jacket and cutoff shorts—picked up another stone, this one the size of a softball and pointed on one end. He walked to the cliff, reached up to eye level with the hand holding the stone, and began to hammer at the porous and friable rock face. With four or five strikes, he gouged out a depression deep enough to stick a foot into. He reached higher, and chipped out another hole. He climbed up the rock, put his left foot in the first hole, his right in the other, and hammered away at a third spot.

"My Lord," Mac said. "He's making a stairway. Handholds and footholds!"

The *zombi* was fifty feet up, just a little under halfway, when one of the hand- or footholds crumbled under his weight, and he fell.

He felt straight backward, landing on a pile of rocks with a sound that made Indy want to heave his long-past breakfast.

After a moment, the fallen *zombi* got up. He seemed . . . crooked, somehow, as if something in his spine or hip had broken, but he went back to the rock face and began to climb. When he reached the spot where he had fallen, he chipped out another depression to replace the crumbled one.

He continued his task, climbing higher.

He was eighty feet up the second time he fell, only this time he landed head-down. His skull split open on the rocks, and he didn't move.

After a few seconds, Green Pants nodded at the second *zombi*, who picked up his fallen comrade's pointed stone and ascended the rock wall. In a few minutes, he was at the top. He clambered over and out of sight.

Green Pants said, "I will go. I am heavy. If I do not fall, it will be safe for you."

With that, he began to climb.

Indy and Mac looked at each other. “Don’t say it,” Mac said.

“What?”

“That this can’t be good.”

“Yeah. Well. Long as you know.”

Indy began to climb.

There came a scream, the sound of branches breaking, and Yamada’s sword was in his hand without conscious thought. He and Suzuki were first to round the curve in the trail—

A big tree, weakened by the storm, had fallen. Yamada’s scout was pinned to the ground by it; actually, *smashed to the ground* would be a better term. He was dead—Yamada could see that ten meters away.

So. Two Germans, Gruber and one soldier; and three of the Empire’s force—Suzuki, one soldier, and himself—remained out of a score of men sent to collect the formula. Which they had thus far failed to do. Worse, they had lost contact with the men who had the item, and their only hope was to try to head them off before they left this hellish island. A smart gambler would not risk much on their chances, Yamada knew. Of course, a samurai would take such a wager, for he would know the determination to succeed that Yamada felt. And that failure was simply not an option, as long as Yamada had one breath left in his body.

A quick examination confirmed what they already knew.

“He was a good soldier,” Yamada said, rising from his squat next to the dead man. “He did his duty.”

That was as good an epitaph as a man needed.

## **THIRTY-TWO**

LATE IN THE AFTERNOON, they had to take a break, and Gruber and Suzuki took the watch so that the others could try and catch a bit of sleep. Even though the rain had stopped and the wind died down, that would be difficult, given the sodden ground, but the conditions were what they were, nothing to be done for it.

Gruber considered his next action. He had been thinking about it for a while, and it seemed to be a good idea every time he examined it. Yes. Do it.

*“Sprechen Sie Deutsch?”* he said to Suzuki.

The Japanese shook his head.

“Speak English?”

Another negative shake. Apparently not.

Well, it would have to be Nihongo, then. Not the best, but he could make himself understood, he had a fair grasp of the language. In slow Japanese, he said, “What part of Japan are you from?”

Suzuki’s eyes widened a hair. He was surprised that Gruber spoke his language, but after that initial clue he hid it well. “Tokyo.”

Gruber nodded and smiled. “Family?”

“A wife, no children yet. My father and mother and grandmother. A brother, two sisters.”

Gruber nodded again. “I hope the conflict has not been bad for them.”

Suzuki shrugged. War was war, the gesture seemed to say.

“It will not last forever. What will you do after?”

Another shrug. “Who can say? Probably stay in the army.”

“Pardon me for being impolite, but is your family well-off?”

Suzuki didn’t understand the question. “Well-off?”

“Wealthy?”

Suzuki chuckled. “Wealthy? Ah, no. Soldier’s pay.”

Here came the moment of choice. Up until now, it was just idle, if nosy, conversation. “Would you like to be? Wealthy?”

“No chance of that.”

“What if there was? A chance, I mean.”

Suzuki, who had been mostly avoiding eye contact, looked directly at Gruber.

"Fortunes are lost during war," Gruber said. "But also gained. Some become poor. Some become rich. A man who—" He faltered, trying to think of the words he needed. "—was in the right place at the right time might come into money, *hai?*"

Suzuki gave him a small nod. "Stranger things have happened, I suppose."

"The Reich has earmarked a certain amount of funding for . . ." What was the word? ". . . *guzen no koto.*"

"And what *contingency* are we talking about?"

Gruber took a deep breath. "Helping the Reich's agents to accomplish certain goals."

"By which you mean yourself?"

"*Hai.*"

"And what would this help require?"

"Not much, really. More of an . . . inaction on your part than anything you would need to do."

"An inaction."

"Yes. Perhaps if you heard a certain noise, saw something in the jungle, you might ignore it."

"Look the other way."

"Precisely."

"I see. And how much would such . . . *inaction* be worth to the Reich, exactly?"

What was the value of the yen to a Deutschmark or British pound these days? Twenty-to-one for the pound? Four or five yen to an American dollar? Well, it didn't really matter, did it? "Five million yen."

Suzuki didn't blink. "That much. That would make a man most wealthy in my country."

"The Reich values its friends."

"So you say. But by my . . . inaction, might I not be found derelict in my duty to the empire?"

"Not if the empire did not know. I would not tell them."

The unspoken inference here was that anybody who might make such a report could . . . have an accident and be unable to do so.

"Ah. I see."

"Think on the matter," Gruber said. "We could speak of it again later."

"Yes. We could."

After the others roused themselves, it was Gruber's turn to try to

rest a bit. He didn't think he'd be able to sleep, but he did smile as he closed his eyes. If he had Suzuki figured correctly, the man wouldn't be able to wait to lay out his conversation with Gruber to Yamada. That the stupid Kraut would think he could *bribe* an imperial Japanese officer, for any amount? The European savages had no concept of honor whatsoever! But as it happened, Gruber did know a bit about that, having learned it with the language, and he was, he hoped, using it to his advantage.

Whatever Suzuki said? He couldn't be trusted. He was a dead man, sooner or later; however, if he believed that he could gull Gruber into thinking they were allies, even for a few hours, it might lull the Japanese into a false sense of confidence. It might provide Gruber with an opportunity to strike when least expected. There were just two of them now, and three of the Nippone. The time was not ripe, but it would be eventually. And any advantage he could get, he wanted . . .

"Yamada-san," Suzuki said. "A few words in private?"

Yamada nodded. "There, by the fallen tree. We will not be overheard."

The two men edged that way.

"What is it?"

"The German colonel speaks passable Japanese."

"I suspected such. And . . . ?"

"He has offered me a bribe to aid him."

"Really? How much?"

"Five million yen."

"Ah. He thinks your honor worth that much?"

"That little," Suzuki said. He spat on the wet ground.

Yamada smiled. "This is useful information, Suzuki-san. It would serve us to have Gruber believe that you will enter into such a bargain, *hai*?"

Suzuki nodded. "*Hai*. If he believes that I have become his agent, it could be to our advantage. He might turn his back at the right moment."

Yamada nodded. "For now, there are but five of us, and we might need every man to survive and win our goal. A man chased by wolves might need to run with dogs. After we obtain our object, the Germans will no longer be our allies here on this island, nor do we need to treat them as such."

"I understand."

“Contrive to speak to him again on the trek. Let him think your greed is stronger than your sense of duty. We will show him that the Japanese know how to deal with treachery . . .”

Both men grinned.

Boukman waited. Victory was almost his. He had Marie—she was on the way—and with her, the key to the *imen blan*. They valued women, the whites did. They would not let her come to harm if they could help it.

Victory was almost his. He could almost taste it.

Green Pants was thirty feet ahead of them, wending his way through the forest. The *zombi* was behind them. It had gotten its foot caught in a fallen branch a way back and broken its ankle. It was continuing to walk, but the foot was crooked and its progress had been slowed. It was falling farther behind as they went.

“We have to hide the artifact,” Mac whispered.

“He’s got Marie,” Indy said. “It’s what he wants.”

“Yes. And if we march right into his hands, he’ll *have* what he wants and no reason to let her—or us—go.”

Indy considered that. Yes. Mac was right. They needed something with which to bargain. If they hid the wooden box with the pearl somewhere that only they could find it, maybe they could get Boukman to release Marie to learn where the treasure was. There was a chance that way.

Of course, he could try to torture it out of them, which wasn’t a particularly pleasant thought; still, just handing it over to the voodoo man and trusting to his sense of fairness didn’t seem like a particularly wise idea. They already knew he was ruthless enough to have men killed. Two more wouldn’t bother him.

At some point, they would have to slip away from Green Pants and the crippled *zombi* trailing them and find a spot to hide the box. That might be tricky.

Indy whispered as much to Mac.

“Don’t worry about that—I have a plan,” Mac said.

“What?”

“Well—” He stopped. Ahead of them, Green Pants had come to a halt, waiting for them to catch up. “Later,” Mac said.

The two of them moved on, stepping over fallen trees, skirting puddles that were probably hip-deep. Now and then, something would scuttle across the animal trail, small creatures still trying to deal with

the aftermath of the hurricane. Indy saw a long green snake slithering past once.

### Snakes!

Indy had been offered teaching fellowships across the length of his career, from various universities around the world. He was considering the idea of taking a couple of these: one in New Zealand, the other in Ireland. The two countries had some things in common. They mostly spoke English, which would make teaching easy. But, more importantly, there were no snakes in either country. None. Not even itty-bitty garter snakes.

Wouldn't that be nice for a change? A stroll down any garden path in Dublin or Auckland, a trek through the countryside in either place, and not a chance of seeing one of the legless reptiles?

It was the kind of thought that made a man want to smile. This man, anyway.

*One thing at a time, Indy. One thing at a time . . .*

## THIRTY-THREE

AS SUZUKI DROPPED BACK, Gruber smiled to himself. The man had taken the bait. If he was truly willing to sell out for the chance at becoming rich, or if he was simply trying to string the fool German along, either was to Gruber's advantage. The way to defeat an enemy was to outmaneuver him, to have him dancing to your tune, reacting rather than initiating. The Japanese code of conduct, as Gruber understood it, allowed a man to stab an enemy in the back—treachery was considered both valid and useful. He could expect no less from them, and he had to assume that they would expect the same from him. Well and good—it had bought him an advantage. The Japanese would think it was theirs, and that was an error. He was a step ahead of them, and if he could maintain it, he would prevail.

Yamada thought of his home in Nagasaki, of his family, and was content in the knowledge that whatever happened to him, at least they would be safe there.

Gruber's overture to Suzuki was unexpected, but not really that much of a surprise. The Germans used everything at hand to ensure their victories, and when you could print money? Such an offer as he had made was cheap. Not, Yamada knew, that the man would keep his end of the bargain even if Suzuki had agreed and meant it. If—no, when—they collected the box the American and Englishman had, Gruber would take his first opportunity to rid himself of his allies. Knowing this gave Yamada the advantage. He would be alert, and he would strike first.

The day wound down, but they were making good progress, moving west and north much faster than they had on the eastward trek. The island was not that large. They had come a fair distance, and with fewer men and supplies, and no need to keep hidden from the prey they had been following, it was likely they would arrive back at their starting place in mere hours—

The sound of three gunshots echoed through the jungle. Small caliber, he guessed, or a long way off. What did it mean—?

"Somebody's shooting," Gruber said unnecessarily.

"Hai. Best we see who. And why."

Mac and Indy were working their way around a swampy area with Green Pants. "Much farther?" Mac asked him.

"No. We are not far from the plantation. There by dark."

"Where is your friend, I wonder?" Mac said. Referring to the *zombi*. Green Pants shrugged. "No matter," he said. "He is not needed."

"Right," Mac said. "Say, what's that there, in the trees to the left?" Green Pants looked. "Where?"

Mac pulled his pistol from his pocket and shot Green Pants in the head. Three times—

"Whoa!" Indy said, as the chemically made *zombi* collapsed.

"See. Not so tricky as all that," Mac said. "Shall we find a place to hide our artifacts?"

"*That* was your plan? Jesus, Mac—"

"Them or us, Indy, and they have Marie."

Indy blew out a sigh. "Yeah. We better hurry before the other one gets here."

Mac, adding more cartridges to the partially emptied magazine for his pistol, smiled. "Oh, I don't think that is going to be tricky, either." He held the pistol up and pressed the magazine into the butt. "I've got plenty of ammunition left."

Yamada's scout returned to where the four of them waited. He was excited. "Yamada-san! The English and American! They are here! Alone!"

Yamada glanced at Gruber. There was no need to translate, he knew, but he continued the fiction. "Our quarry is not far. Just the Englishman and American, it seems."

Five to two. Good odds, and not likely to get any better.

"Let us go and catch them," Yamada said.

They moved out.

Boukman walked into the clearing. Darkness was near, and he ordered the torches lit. Around this part of the sisal plantation was a ring of makeshift torches, made of coffee cans nailed to posts. Each can held a roll of toilet paper drenched in kerosene. They put out a fair amount of light when there were thirty or so of them flaming at once. Plenty enough to see what he needed to see.

And that was Marie, being led into the clearing by his slave.

There were a dozen True Risen here now, and twice that many potioned ones—Boukman had expended most of his power to raise the

dead, and had borrowed a few villagers for the others. They would be but a small number compared with those he would have once he obtained the talisman. Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, more. The power was coming to him.

"Ah, *petite* Marie. At last we see each other face-to-face."

She spat on the ground at his feet.

Boukman laughed. Oh, he enjoyed her. Too bad.

"Just like your mother," he said.

"Do not speak of her!"

He shrugged. "Why not? She is dead and I allowed her to stay that way. You should be grateful for that much."

That got her attention. "You . . . killed my mother?"

"She was becoming dangerous. Just as you are."

She struggled, but his slaves had her.

Too bad, for what he had to do to her would not be pleasant for her. Boukman knew that a man was not granted such as the talisman without payment. And that the loa or the gods—surely Maldye, for the good would not allow such a thing among men—would demand more from him than the sacrifice of a few chickens or a goat. No, they would want human blood. More, they would want some kind of power in exchange. A hougan or a mambo might be enough, along with a handful of less talented folk. A few Europeans, some of the Japanese, and the Englishman and American would probably be sufficient. If not, then Boukman would slay the entire village on this island, if need be. Whatever it took for him to deserve the talisman, and to bend it to his will.

Marie would open the door, though. She would have to be first. Once he had the talisman in his hands. And that should be soon.

"Tie her," Boukman said. "Put her there."

The True Risen shuffled her forward. She struggled, to no avail. In a few moments she was bound, trussed up, waiting for whatever Boukman would do next.

"What are they doing?" Gruber asked, his voice a whisper.

"Putting something into that hollow log," Yamada said.

Gruber felt his heart beating with excitement. The treasure! What else could it be? "We should shoot them."

"No," Yamada said. "The sound might bring others. Our number is small. Better to see what they are hiding first. If we must shoot them, we can do it anytime. Alive, dead, they do not matter."

Gruber nodded. Yes. Yamada had a point.

“Look,” Yamada said, “they are leaving.”

The two men moved out of sight.

The Germans and Japanese waited for a couple of minutes, to make sure they weren’t coming back. Then they headed for the hollow log.

Halfway there, something limped out of the jungle—

It lunged at Suzuki—

The Japanese pulled his sword, but the thing fell upon him and sank its teeth into his throat, ripping and tearing like a mad dog—

The other Japanese soldier raised his rifle—

“Don’t shoot!” Yamada said. He pulled his sword—it just *appeared* in his hand—and he ran three steps and slashed down, catching the thing behind the head, across the neck—

The thing collapsed—

Yamada stuck his sword into the ground and bent, rolled the beheaded thing off his officer, but—

Suzuki’s throat was gone, a ragged, pulsing wound, blood pooling everywhere—

“Suzuki—!”

The downed man could not speak, managing only a gurgle.

He was done, Gruber could see that.

Yamada could, too. He reached for his sword, pulled it free of the earth. Lifted it. Brought it down—

Gruber watched, fascinated.

Yamada raised his sword. Slung blood from the blade.

Nobody spoke. And now they were four. Alas, poor Suzuki. Gruber didn’t need his fake bribe anymore. Wasted effort now.

“Hard choices,” Gruber said, after a long moment.

Yamada nodded. “Hai.”

But in the end, it did not matter, for the artifact they had come to collect was inside a backpack stuffed into the hollow log.

At last!

There was a moment when it might have been dicey, but Gruber nodded at Yamada: “Your man can carry it, if it makes you feel better.”

Yamada nodded in return. “Or yours. We are allies, *hai*? What does it matter who holds the prize?”

“Shall we have a look?”

Yamada nodded again. He told his man to remove the box from the pack, and in a moment it was done. Inside, a wooden jar. And inside that—a large black pearl, wrapped in silk.

The men looked at the pearl. Very nice, worth a fortune, and nothing to sniff at, but it wasn't the important thing. The runes carved into the boxes—those were the real treasure here. The formula for the chemical Herr Hitler had sent him to find.

Gruber couldn't decipher them, of course, but there were experts in the Reich who could. All he had to do was deliver these boxes. Maybe he would keep the pearl for himself. Captain Doktor Edwin *von* Gruber, and richer than Croesus . . .

The Japanese soldier rewrapped the pearl, stuck it into the jar, and put that back into the box and into the pack. He shouldered it.

"We should get off this damn island as soon as we can," Gruber said.

*"Hai."*

They started off, Gruber and his man taking the lead. In a quick and quiet whisper, Gruber said, "Don't lose sight of that backpack, on your life."

*"Jawohl, Colonel."*

In the jungle, they were still at risk. Once they got back to the boat, then would come the reckoning with Yamada.

## THIRTY-FOUR

BOUKMAN FELT the surge of energy wash over him, as unexpected as the sun suddenly shining at midnight. The talisman! Somebody had taken it from its protective case!

Greedily, he tried to draw the power to himself, but after only a few seconds the energy vanished as quickly as it had come.

He frowned. What did this mean? The Englishman and American who had the talisman should be close by now. Why would they have stopped to look at it?

He glanced at Marie, tied up and sitting with her back against the wall of a storage hut. She had closed her eyes, and Boukman knew that she, too, had felt the talisman's flux. No one with any sensitivity could have failed to sense it, and she had been exposed to it before, had drawn upon its energy to hide herself from him.

"Your friends are coming, Marie. Bringing the prize right to me."

"Maybe," she said.

He smiled, but it quickly faded. What did she mean by that? Of course they were coming!

Indy and Mac arrived at the edge of a cultivated area, and even in the dark, the star- and moonlight was enough so they could see that it had been planted with sisal. On the far side of the clearing, four, five hundred yards away, torches blazed against the night.

"This must be the place," Indy said.

"I don't think this is one of your better plans. Which is not saying much."

"It's what we have to work with, Mac. If Boukman thinks you're dead, you can sneak around and maybe be in a position to do us some good. If you walk in there with me, that gives us fewer options."

"Yes, but—"

"Listen, I have my gun. Soon as I get close, I'll shoot him. I'll grab Marie, we light out for the coast and leave the *zombis* and Japs and Krauts to dance with each other."

Mac sighed. "Yes, well, but—"

"I'm open to a better idea."

"Would that I had one."

"Yeah. Would that you did." Indy took a deep breath. "Wish me luck."

"Good luck, Jonesy."

Indy squared his shoulders and stepped out of the jungle into the clearing.

Boukman's slaves noticed the man before he managed two steps into the clearing, and several of them made as if to go and collect him. "Non," Boukman said. "Wait."

The man—the American—walked toward them.

Boukman opened his senses to the night. After a moment, he grinned. He waved a trio of potioned ones over, spoke a few words.

Then he waited.

\* \* \*

Place was occupied pretty good, Indy noticed. Thirty or forty people, mostly standing around. He figured Boukman for the old, tall, and thin guy dressed in a black shirt and pants. In the torchlight, he saw Marie. She was tied up and sitting next to the shed behind Boukman.

The rest of the folks here were probably *zombis* or drugged—they weren't moving, save for three of them heading away to the west.

It didn't take long to get close. When he was twenty feet away, Indy stopped.

"Where is your comrade?" the tall man said. He had a deep voice, and he spoke good English.

"Dead," Indy said. "Along with the guys you sent to fetch us. We were attacked by Japanese soldiers."

Boukman laughed. "Plausible story."

Indy figured this was as good a time as any. He snatched his revolver out of his holster, thrust it toward Boukman, indexing the whole gun against the man's form, no time to line up the sights, he'd just shoot until he hit him—

Boukman waved his hand as if he were shooing flies.

—Indy's gun flared into a searing heat, as if it had suddenly turned into molten steel. He couldn't hold on to it—the gun fell—

Indy squatted and reached for the gun again—okay, it would burn, but—

Boukman laughed. "Oh, no, Dr. Jones. That won't do!"

—the gun shimmered, shivered, elongated, and in a moment transformed itself into a large, tongue-flickering, hissing, undulating—

*—snake—!*

Indy recoiled.

Boukman laughed again.

Indy had his whip. If he moved fast enough—

“Bide a moment—!” Boukman said. “If you do anything else stupid, your friend truly *will* die. Bring him!”

Boukman stared past Indy. Indy turned, to see Mac being dragged in their direction by a trio of Boukman’s slaves.

Ah, damn—!

Mac wasn’t making it easy for them, but he was outmatched.

Apparently Dame Fortune had shut off the good-luck tap.

Indy turned back to face Boukman.

“I have been around a long time, Dr. Jones. A very long time. I am adept in the ways of deception and deceit. I am not so easily fooled. You are mine now, and I will have the talisman.”

Indy waited until Mac arrived. The *zombis*—magic or chemical, he couldn’t tell—released Mac. He gave Indy a quick look, and Indy knew what he was thinking—he still had his little pistol.

“Don’t bother,” Indy said. “Gun isn’t gonna do it.”

Boukman laughed again, a sound that already grated on Indy’s nerves.

“The talisman!”

“You *see* it anywhere, Sparky?” Indy said.

Boukman frowned. “Where is it?”

“It’s in a safe place. Here’s the deal—you let Marie go, we’ll take you to where it is.”

Boukman shook his head. “I can get the information from you.”

“Maybe.”

“Oh, no ‘maybe’ to it. A sip of my potion, and you will tell me everything I want to know, from your first memories of crawling to this very moment. But . . . I would have to send one of my slaves to go and collect some of the potion, which is not nearby. I would rather not wait.”

“Let Marie go, I’ll take you there right now. You’ll have what you want in less than an hour.”

Boukman appeared to consider this. After a moment, he smiled and said, “Very well. She means nothing to me.” He said something to the three who’d brought Mac, in a language Indy didn’t know. One of them went and stood Marie up, untied her bonds, then followed her to where Indy stood.

“You okay?”

She rubbed at her wrist. “I am okay.”

“We’re doing a swap,” Indy said. “You for the pearl. He lets you go, we take him to where we hid it.”

“You cannot trust him, Indy!”

“Yeah, well, there’s not a lot of choice here.”

“No!”

Indy knew she was right, but what he’d said was true: There weren’t any good choices. A small chance was better than none. Not that he trusted Boukman as far as he could throw him one-handed.

Boukman said, “So, *petite Marie*, you are free to leave.”

“Indy, he can’t get the talisman—”

“Go on, Marie. Take off.”

“You can’t—”

“Just go, okay?”

She nodded. “All right.”

She turned and walked toward the jungle.

“Once she’s got a good head start,” Indy said, “we’ll take you to the pearl.”

“I expect no less.”

Boukman grinned yet again. How child-like these *imen blan* were! Did they really believe they could walk in here and force such a bargain on him? That he would just roll over like an old dog wishing to have its belly scratched?

His slaves would collect little Marie before she got five minutes away—Boukman needed her for the sacrifice, he could not just let her go. Once he had the talisman, the rituals would proceed. Within a few hours, he would be the most powerful bokor who had ever lived.

It was a thought to savor, like a fine meal or a vintage liquor. It was why he had let the *imen blan* live rather than just killing them and raising them to his bidding. For the pleasure of it.

After a few moments, Boukman said, “Shall we go?”

The one Marie had called Indy nodded. “Yes.”

## THIRTY-FIVE

WITH A DOZEN assorted *zombis* carrying torches to light their way, Indy and Mac led Boukman to where they had hidden the artifact. They took their time, did it in as roundabout a way as they could, stalling for time. Which was pretty much all the plan they had. At least Marie could get away . . .

The priest was no fool. After nearly an hour of wandering, he said, “Enough of this. Either you take me directly to the talisman or I will kill one of you. If the other one continues to drag his feet, I will kill him, as well.”

“That won’t help you find it,” Indy said.

“Oh, but it will—for you see, you won’t *stay* dead. And while the True Risen do not have air to breathe and thus voices to speak, they obey my commands to the letter. Dead or alive, you will lead me to that which I seek. It matters not to me which it is, *comprenez?*”

Indy blew out a sigh. Yeah. He understood.

So, an hour and a half after they left the sisal plantation, they arrived at the hollow log where they had stashed the backpack earlier. The backpack—

—was gone!

Indy was certain this was the right spot—he had marked the log with his machete, and there was the cut, right there—

“My patience is no more, Dr. Jones.”

“It was here, I swear. Look, you can see the footprints!”

Boukman waved at one of the zombies, who held his torch down low. Sure enough, there were footprints in the soft earth.

Too many footprints.

Another of the *zombis* came over and stood in front of Boukman. “What?”

The *zombi* turned and shuffled away.

Boukman and the others followed.

A few yards away in the darkness, a cloud of flies buzzed around something on the ground . . .

Indy saw the two bodies there. One was a local, dark-skinned, and Indy recognized him as the crippled *zombi* who had followed them from the sea. The other man was Japanese.

Boukman said, “So. The yellow men were here. They found your

hiding spot. They have what I want.”

He spoke rapidly to the dozen slaves with them. They scattered and melted into the forest.

“Back to the plantation,” Boukman said. “My slaves will find the little men from Japan and capture them.”

“If it is all the same to you, we’ll just be on our way,” Mac said.

“No, I think not. Our bargain was for you to deliver the talisman. Until I have it, you will stay with me.”

“Two of us, one of you,” Mac said. “And I have *this!*”

Mac pulled his little Italian pistol from his pocket.

Boukman laughed.

\* \* \*

“How the bloody hell did he *do* that?” Mac asked. He was staring at his hand, looking for blisters.

The three of them walked through the jungle, Boukman in the lead, carrying a bright, flaming torch.

“I don’t know,” Indy said. “Some kind of illusion. Tactile hallucination, maybe. He did it to me earlier, and I would have expected to find third-degree burns on my fingers, but there’s not a mark on them. And it got worse when I tried to pick up the gun.”

“Worse? How?”

“Never mind.”

“We could just run.”

“In the dark? Not a good idea. Place is full of bogs, probably quicksand, and the jungle is crawling with *zombis*. If he catches the Japs and gets the pearl, maybe he’ll let us go.”

“You think so?”

Indy shook his head. “I wouldn’t bet on it. But at least there we can see what we’re doing. Maybe Marie can get help at the village. Bunch of men with guns could come back to rescue us.”

Mac gave him a look.

“Well, it *could* happen. We’ll just have to wait for our chance.”

“I don’t fancy that idea much.”

“Me, neither. But I’m not seeing a lot of options here. If Boukman can make us think our guns are too hot to touch, what else can he do to our minds? We try to run, he could make us think we’re getting away clear and direct us off a cliff.”

Mac didn’t have anything to say about that.

## THIRTY-SIX

YAMADA GAVE a good account of himself, but in the end there were too many of them. His last soldier fired his rifle empty and went down; Gruber's final man also fell, mortally wounded.

Yamada's sword dug deeply into one of the things—sheared off an upraised arm that deflected the blade slightly so that it sank into a collarbone and got stuck. By the time he managed to wrench the sword loose, a pair of the things hit him from behind and bore him down. He struggled. No good.

The thing with the chopped-off arm seemed largely unaffected by its loss.

Not men. Once, yes, but not now. Evil things. *Gaki*. Had the formula done this? Or was it something else?

Gruber shot his pistol until it clicked dry, then tried to run, but he was tripped by one of them on the ground and caught.

They didn't kill them, which surprised Yamada. Instead, the remaining half a dozen half dragged and pushed them along.

Being captured by these things had not figured into Yamada's plans. He had a short knife in his boot, and they hadn't noticed it. If worse came to worst, he could take his own life. Knowing that, he resolved to stay alive a little longer, to see if he might salvage something from the situation. Things were not good, but all was not yet lost.

"Where are they taking us?" Gruber asked. His voice was full of fear.

"Your guess is as good as mine," Yamada said. But he reasoned that it was not a place that he would have chosen to go on his own. Certainly not without his sword.

## **THIRTY-SEVEN**

**W**HEN THEY got back to the clearing, Indy got a rude surprise:

“Marie!”

“Did you really think I would just let her go, *iman blan*? I have a need for her. You, too.”

“Indy!”

He started for her, but half a dozen *zombis* grabbed him and held him fast. He couldn’t break loose—

Marie said, “The talisman is too powerful for even you, Boukman! It will destroy you!”

“He doesn’t have it!” Indy yelled.

Marie stared at him.

“The Japs were on our trail again! They found it and took it!”

“Good!” Marie called back.

But it wasn’t so good. As the *zombis* were tying the three of them, binding their arms and legs, another group of the things emerged from the forest. They had a couple of captives, and they dragged them to stand in front of Boukman.

Indy looked at the two. One of ‘em was Japanese, sure enough, but the other was fair-haired and light-skinned. A German.

“So nice of you to drop by,” Boukman said. “And with a gift for Boukman!”

A *zombi* took the backpack the German carried and handed it to Boukman. He opened the pack, removed the wooden box. Opened it, took out the wooden jar within, dropped the box onto the wet ground. He held the jar up in the torchlight and looked at it. “Finally!” he said. “Finally!”

*Come on, Jones! Now is the time to come up with something brilliant—!*

Now that he had the talisman, there was no rush. A few more minutes would not matter. Preparations needed to be made properly, patterns laid out, an avatar constructed. Bowls for the blood, the ceremonial knife must be razor-sharp, all must be done before the spirits were called upon, all must be perfect.

Boukman smiled. All would be.

Indy looked at the two new arrivals, his first chance to see them, even though they had been dogging him since they got to this island. Maybe even since they'd left Port-au-Prince. Tied up, same as he was, they weren't a threat anymore. No, they were all trussed together and in the same boat now, and given the way things looked it would be sinking to the bottom pretty soon . . .

Indy said, "Marie? What's next?"

She sighed. "Boukman will ready his rituals. Things must be done a certain way when you speak with loa or gods; an error could be fatal. He has been doing this a long time, he doesn't make those kinds of errors. He wants the power invested in the pearl. Whoever put it there is in the Other Realm. It seems too strong to be any of the loa I know about. Could be an unknown one. Could be several combined their energy to store it in the pearl. Might be one of the Maldye—the evil gods. I cannot say."

"It does not matter. Boukman will offer a petition. He will render sacrifices."

"What kind of sacrifice?" Mac asked.

Indy noticed that the German and the Japanese were listening as intently as he was.

"For small favors, you make small offerings. For something this big, it must be more."

"Are we talking human sacrifice?" Indy asked.

"Yes."

"One of us?" Mac asked.

"More likely all of us," she said. "I have some small power, and the loa enjoy the taste of that. You are white men, and not usually on their menu around here. The German and the Japanese are also rare in these lands. Boukman will offer us and as many of the locals as he believes necessary to attain his desire. If he can absorb and contain but half of the force in the black pearl, he will truly become a heart of darkness himself. More powerful than any bokor, as powerful as some loa, maybe even approaching some of the minor gods."

She paused. "As evil as he is, such an infusion will be catastrophic for the world. He could raise thousands of *zombis*, an army of the dead, and woe to anybody who tries to stand against him."

"I really don't like the sound of that," Indy said.

"It would seem as if we are cooked," Mac said.

Marie hesitated a moment. "There is a small chance," she said. "When he removes the pearl from the warded jar, the energy will spill out in all directions. I might be able to collect part of it. I have been somewhat . . . attuned to the talisman. If I can siphon off a bit before

Boukman takes it all, it might be possible to use this to help you escape.”

“Us escape? What about you?”

“I am doomed, no matter what. Boukman cannot keep the power without feeding the loa—or the gods. If he cannot do it now, he might be able to put them off for a time, but he will come for me. He must. And I cannot allow him to obtain this magic and live if there is even the smallest chance to stop him. My life would be a small price to pay for that.”

“Not so small,” Indy said.

She smiled at him. “Would that things might have been different, Indy. That we could have had more time.”

The German, in good English, said, “This romantic moment is touching, but would it not be better to turn our attention to escape?”

Indy stared at him.

“I am Dr. Gruber, this is Dr. Yamada.”

“Yeah, well, I can’t say it’s a pleasure to make your acquaintances. My experiences with Nazi Germany and imperial Japan haven’t been among the highlights of my career so far.”

“Would you rather be sacrificed to some pagan god here in this tropical hothouse than work with us?”

Indy shrugged. Gruber had a point. Then again, he didn’t see what help they were going to be—they were as helpless as Indy was. He said, “You aren’t exactly bringing a lot to the table, are you?”

“I have a knife in my boot,” Yamada said, also in good, if accented English. “It might be useful at the right moment.”

“So would a Sikorsky R-4 helicopter. I don’t think a knife is gonna do us much good against a small army of *zombis*.”

“Well, it *would* be easier to run if we weren’t tied up,” Mac allowed. “If we could get to a boat and off this island . . .”

“If Boukman gains the power held in the pearl, that won’t help,” Marie said. “His reach will be farther than we could run, swim, or fly.”

Indy shook his head. Whatever. He wasn’t going to let Marie die if he could possibly help it, no matter what she said.

Boukman worked, setting up more torches in the circle he would need to help ward the talisman’s power once he began the ritual. They must be placed precisely, else they would offer a way for the power to escape when he took it from the jar.

When the torches were done, he had to prepare himself. The magic smoke, the call to Papa Legba, the invitation for the creator of the

talisman. Once invocations were done and the loa or god arrived, the blood would have to flow for him—or her—and the petition be offered with the proper prayers. The principle was the same, but the desire was bigger than any Boukman had ever sought.

Even so, it would succeed—else why had he been given the talisman? It had been delivered into his keeping, and there could only be one reason: The gods were now ready to transfer its benefits. He would step precisely, toe the line perfectly, observe the forms, that was necessary . . . but he would have his reward.

He did not doubt it for a moment. His time had come.

\* \* \*

Gruber watched the witch doctor walking around inside a small circle of torches he had just erected, smoking something from a pipe that looked suspiciously like a human's thighbone. The blue cloud wreathing Boukman was dense; even thirty meters away, he could smell the sharp and spicy odor of it.

Gruber didn't believe in magic, but obviously this Boukman character did, and he was ramping himself up into some kind of trance to do whatever it was he was planning to do.

Gruber didn't care about that. What he needed was that wooden box lying there on the damp ground, not ten meters away. If he could get loose, if he could snatch the box up and run, if he could attain the jungle and then a boat? All the rest of this would be a bad memory he would leave behind him.

He might need the wooden jar, too—that had more carved symbols on it, and those might be key—but if all Boukman wanted was the pearl, then let him have it. In the grand scheme of things, it didn't matter. If Gruber returned home in triumph, he could find other ways to get rich.

Yamada had a knife. Good. There would come a moment. He was certain of it.

Indy watched as Boukman sat cross-legged on the earth, the wooden jar on the ground in front of him. Boukman's eyes were closed, he'd finished smoking whatever had been in his pipe, and he was chanting softly.

Around him, the chemically created *zombis* began to chant, their voices joining Boukman's. The other ones, the dead, did not make a sound, but they swayed back and forth like a captive elephant, rhythmically, in unison—all to the left, all to the right, as if joined at the hip.

"He calls upon the Gatekeeper," Marie said. "And once the Gate is open, he will call for the creator of the talisman. When he comes, even you will feel it. Boukman will take the talisman out of the jar for its creator to examine. The circle of torches will keep most of the power warded, but some of it will escape. I will try to catch what I can."

The chanting, more of a wordless drone now, increased in volume. It had a lulling, almost hypnotic quality to it . . .

Yamada felt a chill sweep over him, like a wind from a glacier, a sensation he never expected to feel in the jungle. It was as if some alien presence had arrived and settled nearby.

He nodded to himself. Demons and hungry ghosts. He was not a deeply religious man, he was a scientist, but he knew what he was feeling. This place was imbued with the spirit of something inhuman. A wrong move at the wrong moment, and this thing would consume a man as a wolf would a mouse. A single crunch of otherworldly teeth and that would be the end of you.

Yamada sat very still.

Indy felt something, no question, but what it was, he couldn't say. Whatever it was, it smelled of evil.

It wasn't something you wanted to notice you if you were tied hand and foot nearby. Indy found himself holding his breath . . .

For a moment Gruber thought he was hallucinating. He *saw* something settle down inside that ring of torches, some ethereal, translucent *something* that assumed a vaguely man-like shape and sat on the ground facing the witch doctor Boukman.

*Must be whatever the man was smoking. Some kind of drug, and some of it drifted this way to affect my mind. That has to be it . . .*

This was no loa sitting across from Boukman. It was some Maldye godling, full of arrogance, reeking of power. It spoke not, but waved what looked like a hand made of fire at the jar. Boukman felt its thoughts:

*Show me*, it demanded.

Boukman unscrewed the wooden lid, removed the talisman, unwrapped it from the silk covering it. He had slit his eyes almost completely closed, yet even so it was like looking into the noonday sun. To stare directly at it was to go blind, so he shifted his gaze to

one side—

*Mine, yes.*

Next to him, Marie moaned. “It is so bright! Come to me—!”

Indy didn’t see anything, but he felt the air stirring around him as a wind that was hot and cold at the same time.

The *zombis* that could speak were in full voice now, and all of them swayed together, as precisely as a machine. Boukman had taken the pearl out, unwrapped it, and set it on the ground—

Boukman felt the Maldye’s smile more than saw it. The god was shifting fires, reds, blues, greens, yellows, swirling and contained, like nothing natural could possibly be.

Yesss? it seemed to say silently inside his head.

Aloud, Boukman said, “I importune thee. Grant me thy favor.”

*What do you offer in return?*

Boukman stood, rising up effortlessly, filled with the radiant energy that shined from the talisman, stronger already than ever before. The potential was astounding.

In the graveyards on the island, anyone dead within the last year began to stir, hearkening to his unspoken call.

Across the miles of sea passage, on the south coast of Haiti, graves rumbled as the dead strove to leave, digging free of rotted coffins, shoveling away earth with their hands . . .

Amazing! And this but a *reflection*, like the sun in a mirror!

Time passed, how much Boukman could not say. Hours? Eons?

Eventually, Boukman drew his knife from his belt. The polished steel glittered in the torchlight. “Bring her,” he said.

Four *zombis* headed to where Indy and the others were tied up.

“Not yet,” Marie said. “I am not ready yet.”

“Now would be a good time to get your knife out,” Indy said to Yamada. “Hurry!”

The four *zombis* arrived. They picked up Marie and carried her back toward Boukman.

“Yamada!”

“Almost . . . almost . . . here—”

He managed to toss the knife toward Indy. It fell two feet short. Indy fell forward, extending his tied hands toward it—

His slaves laid Marie on the ground in front of him. Boukman squatted, raised the knife, offered a Word—

*Wait. I will see her dance first.*

Boukman frowned. Well. It was the god's sacrifice, he could do with her what he wished.

Boukman laid the edge of the knife onto the ropes. In a moment Marie was free. She rose up, as if to run, but the living fire gestured and she stopped.

*Dance*, it said.

Marie leaned her head back. Shook her hair out. Began to dance, under the Maldye's control—

Indy managed to saw away the ropes holding him, cutting himself a couple of times, but that didn't matter. Quickly he cut Mac's hands loose and handed him the knife. "Cut yourself loose," he said.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to give Boukman something to think about!"

But as Indy gathered himself to go, he noticed something.

Around the periphery of the clearing, forms began appearing and moving toward the center. It took a second for him to realize what they were, what he was seeing.

*Zombis*. And some of them little more than skeletons—they had to have been buried for weeks, months, maybe years—!

"Oh, damn," he said. "Okay, Mac, listen—I'm going to get their attention. Try to get to Marie, okay?"

Mac nodded. "What about them?" He nodded at Gruber and Yamada.

"His knife, we owe him. Cut them loose, they get the same chance we do."

"Good luck, Indy!"

"Yeah. You, too."

Indy stayed low, halfway between a crawl and a duckwalk, and made his way to one of the torches nearby. He grabbed the stick, worked it back and forth a bit, then jerked it out of the ground.

One of the swaying *zombis* noticed him.

Indy swung the torch like an axman trying to split a log and slammed the torch down onto the top of the *zombi*'s head.

It screamed. Ah. One of the *live* ones—

Gruber saw the American attack one of the men with a torch. The man

took fire as some of the fuel splashed onto him and lit.

The man screamed.

Others turned to see, and the American began flailing like a baseball player, back and forth, back and forth—

As soon as his feet were free, Gruber got up and hurried to the wooden box. Nobody was paying him any attention.

It would have to do—the jar was too far and there were too many people between it and him.

Yamada appeared next to him.

“Time to leave,” Gruber said.

“*Hai!*”

But both men were scientists—and transfixed enough by what they saw that they stood there watching . . .

## THIRTY-EIGHT

INDY DODGED, ducked, and kept swinging the torch. Kerosene spewed, igniting as he slung the thing back and forth, making strings of flaming liquid that arced into the night.

*Zombis* came at him, and he jinked to the side, avoiding their grasps. Too many of them, he'd never beat them all, but if he could get them chasing him, Mac might have a chance to save Marie—

A ragged circle of eight or ten of them started to close in on him, though, and he was trapped—!

All right, he'd go down swinging—

There was a sudden bright flash, and a big *whoosh!* behind him. Indy turned to see Mac, holding a torch of his own and standing next to a drum with flaming liquid pouring from it onto the ground—the darkness retreated from the burning pool—

“Over here, you bloody bastards! Come and get me if you can!”

Indy managed a grin.

Distracted for an instant, the *zombis* in front of him lost focus, and Indy battered his way through them. Last one he hit, the torch broke open and fire *whooshed!* from that, too, as the *zombi* seemed to explode into flame. It uttered no sound—

\* \* \*

Boukman's rage flared in him like the fires the *imen blan* had started. How *dare* they interrupt this ceremony! He would squash them like insects! He would have them ripped limb from limb!

The Maldye seemed to take delight in the chaos. As Marie, in the grip of the thing's power, danced almost erotically in the circle, the Maldye's thoughts came:

Yesss . . .

The power Boukman had absorbed was but a small piece of what was in the talisman, incidental to the main part of it; even so, it was like bathing in energy, he felt stronger than he had ever felt, and all he needed to do was focus it properly.

The dead were rising and more of them coming, but he couldn't seem to connect to them directly. Something was interfering, somehow, something was blocking him—what was it?

No. Not what. *Who* . . .

Marie! She was bathed in the same energy. The Maldye had her dancing to his unheard tune, but even as she did, she soaked in the light from the talisman! Here was a danger—!

She had to die. To feed the Maldye, now!

He reached for his knife again—

Indy found another handy torch, pulled it up, and hammered his way toward Marie. He would have to do it; Mac was too far away.

As he got closer, he saw Boukman pull a knife and raise it—

Indy had thrown the javelin in college. Not well, and not far, but he was only thirty feet away. He pulled the torch back like a spear, felt the heat of the flame singe his hair and scorch his hat—

He threw the torch—

It was top-heavy and didn't fly straight. It started to spin, rotating, so it wasn't the fire that hit Boukman, but the stick part. Even so, it was enough to knock the knife from his hand—

Indy ran toward them—

Boukman felt the impact, and the shock of it caught him unprepared. He lost the knife, lost his balance, staggered, but kept to his feet.

*“Sakpata Loa!”* he screamed—“Help me!”

Indy was almost there—

“Indy!” Marie yelled. “The pearl! I need the pearl!”

She continued to dance, as if she were a puppet on strings. It was bizarre.

It was all bizarre—

He knocked over one of the inner circle of torches, and when he did, the *zombis* in line with it behind him collapsed, as if struck by lightning. He kept going—

Boukman turned, saw Indy, and raised a hand—

Indy dove, hit the ground on his shoulder—ow!—but rolled up and kept going. He scrabbled past Marie, still dancing, and dove again. This time he grabbed the pearl as he rolled.

He came up, and the black pearl felt like his gun when Boukman had made it hot. It was burning him, but he held on.

“No!” Boukman screamed.

Indy thought he heard another voice, deep in his head:

*Yes!* it said.

Boukman cursed, and Indy felt his legs turn rubbery. He fell, unable to support himself, but he crawled. Marie was only a couple more feet

...

"Marie!"

Boukman was coming—

She looked down at him. Dropped into a low dance step, as if doing a split—

He shoved the Heart of Darkness into her hand.

Somebody laughed inside Indy's head. Something was really funny, though he didn't have a clue what it was—

More *zombis* appeared and came at Indy. Six, eight, ten of them, and he knew it was about to be all over. He couldn't get to his feet in time, and even if he could—

Marie was there. Holding the black pearl in both hands and singing? chanting? moaning? He couldn't tell.

Boukman stopped. He cursed again, but Marie said, "No. Not this time!"

The *zombi* closest to Indy grabbed him, lifted him up, and bared its teeth as it lunged to bite out his throat—

—but the *zombi* next to it smashed the one holding Indy with a head-butt to its nose, and the thing let go of him. The two *zombis* grappled and fell to the ground—

Indy looked around. Boukman was moving away, waving his hands and yelling.

Around them, the *zombis* had turned on one another.

Indy realized what must have happened. Marie had done it. Just as she had at the village. Only now, she had a lot more horsepower.

\* \* \*

Boukman called on every bit of strength he had taken in. He was more skilled than Marie, he knew so much more, but she was feeding from the talisman, and the raw energy of it was too much. He would have to use his talents to beat her!

Two hundred years' practice to her scant twenty or so, he had ten times her experience! He could do this, he could still prevail—he just had to be careful—!

She had taken control of some of his slaves—!

Indy looked at Marie. Her eyes were completely white and her face creased with veins. Her hands trembled. She chanted, words Indy didn't understand. But he knew that Marie had wrested control of some the *zombis* from Boukman and they were going at one another.

But—which were *hers* and which *his*?

—a *zombi* dressed all in black leaped onto one wearing what looked like a sarong—the one in black looked alive, the other much less so. They toppled to the wet ground, clawing and biting at each other—

—a naked and rotting man was ignoring the pair biting and tearing chunks out of his body in favor of the one he was dismembering—

—five *zombis* were locked in undead combat against ten others, a tangle of limbs and teeth—

—one of them, on fire but apparently not bothered that much about it, lurched past Indy and wrapped its flaming arms around another of the mob, pulling it close—

—the second one's clothes caught fire, and it screamed.

Who was in control of which ones? Which should Indy attack?

And with what? His gun was gone. Another torch? . . . wait, he had his whip, for all the good that might do—

Gruber stared as one of his men—the missing soldier!—went up against a dark man with a shaved head. The pair of them grappled and fell, and a Japanese soldier arrived and wrapped his arm around the bald one's neck—

Yamada, awed, watched the battle. There was no skill to it, no sense of strategy or tactics, just the hammering of fists and feet, the flashing of stained and broken teeth.

There—was that one of his men? Trying to gouge the eyeballs out of a woman he had pinned to the wet ground?

—vertebrae cracked as another one lurched in and grabbed the soldier, twisted his head—

They had to go. They had to—but the scientist in him wanted to stay and watch, it was so unbelievable—

“Doctor!” Gruber said.

Yes. Time to go, now!

Boukman screamed and unleashed what energy he had remaining in all directions. *Zombis* fell, living and dead, flattened by the blast. Marie was too strong—he had to hit her hard!

But he made a mistake—what he let go also splashed against the Maldye—

The evil god was enraged. Boukman felt the malignant darkness well and flow reflexively from the fiery creature, roiling like lava and

spewing toward him—

Boukman raised his shield, and the black fire splashed harmlessly over him but knocked down *zombis*, smashed into the shed, flattened trees in its path. He could withstand that, but it took all his concentration. “I did not mean it!” he yelled. “Please!”

He had to concentrate or he would—

“Hey, pal!” somebody yelled.

Boukman looked. Jones. The American, lunging at him with something in his hand—a rope? No, a whip—

Boukman raised his hand to ward off the attack—

Two things happened: His protective shield slipped—just a hair, but enough to allow a bit of the black fire to touch him. And then he flinched at its touch, enough so that his warding-off gesture missed Jones—

Indy snapped his wrist out straight and tugged back a hair as he cast the length of his whip at Boukman. The leather end flew past the bokor, not fast enough to crack the sound barrier, but enough to curl back and wrap around the man’s thin neck—

Boukman screamed as the whip encircled his throat. He grabbed it, and the leather caught fire. He needed only a second and it would be burned to ash—

—but his attention upon the whip choking the life out of him took his attention away from his shield . . .

Indy saw his whip burst into blue-green fire, but he pulled for all he was worth—

—Boukman toppled, face-forward but in slow motion, as if falling through thick glue—

—Boukman, as he fell, realized that it was The Dream. The awful heat at his back, the vileness of his pursuer, it was, after all these years, coming to pass. The Maldye—!

—Boukman’s shield winked out, leaving him unprotected against the black fire that washed over him—

He screamed—“No—!”

The blue-green fire raced up Indy’s whip toward him, and he let go of

the handle just as it exploded into unnaturally colored flame—

—Boukman was down, and as Indy watched, a different kind of conflagration enveloped the bokor, what looked like black fire, swirling around him. He screamed, and the darkness somehow flashed in a way that blinded Indy; he threw his forearm up to cover his eyes from a bleakness too intense to behold—

When he lowered his arm and looked past the afterimages on his retinas, he could see what was left of bokor Boukman on the ground: a pile of smoking gray ash . . .

Marie stood there, smiling, and it was not a pleasant expression, but one full of triumph. She waved one hand at Indy.

“Marie . . .”

“It wasn’t me. He did it to himself,” she said. “The evil turned on him.”

“Are you okay?”

“I am fine, Indy. More than you can imagine. What was Boukman’s is now mine. I have . . . energy beyond any I have ever imagined. We are safe.”

Indy nodded. “You knew all along about the magic attached to this, didn’t you? From the moment we met?”

“I didn’t know for sure. I suspected. I grew up hearing the stories. Once I realized they were true, I could not allow Boukman to obtain the pearl. I’m sorry. I should have told you.”

He nodded again. “Yeah. You should have.”

He looked around. “Mac?”

“Still here, by God!” Mac called from behind him.

Indy turned.

They were alive.

Son-of-a-bitch! How about that?

What about the German and Japanese?

As if in answer to his thought, Mac said, “The Axis seem to have left the field.”

Indy nodded. “I wonder how far they got?”

“Not far,” Marie said.

Indy looked at her.

She shrugged.

## **THIRTY-NINE**

**D**ESPITE ALL THE ODDS, all the death and destruction, the storms and fighting and everything, Gruber had survived. More, he and Yamada had escaped and were approaching the sea. A hundred meters away, there was a small boat tied to a rickety dock, both of which had somehow escaped the hurricane's heavy winds and waves. A man stood by the boat, his back to them.

Excellent!

"It appears that we have won," Yamada said.

The two men were no more than a couple of meters apart.

"Yes, it does, doesn't it? Why don't you let me carry the box for a while? You must be tired."

"It does not weigh all that much," Yamada said.

"I insist. Give it to me."

Yamada laughed. "You insist? I am a samurai, Doctor. Trained with a sword, but also with my hands. You cannot defeat me in personal combat." He looked at Gruber in wonder. Did the man think that he had come all this way to simply give him the artifact with the formula because he *asked* for it? Whatever training Gruber might have in hand-to-hand combat, it could not begin to approach Yamada's expertise in ju-jitsu. He could take the German apart like a child's toy, break his neck and leave him here without working up a sweat, even in this climate. If Gruber was ready to die, then that was up to him.

Yamada bent to put the box onto the ground, to free his hands.

When he straightened, Gruber had something pointed at him. What was—?

The realization hit him. He had made a mistake.

He had underestimated his enemy.

Gruber aimed the little Swiss pistol at Yamada. There was but one shot, and the barrel was short and had no sight, so it was like pointing his finger at a target. But the distance was small, less than two armspans, and he could spit and hit Yamada this close.

Yamada frowned.

"Walk away from the box and live, Doctor," Gruber said.

"No! I will not—!"

Gruber pulled the trigger.

Despite the rigors of rain and tropical heat, the tiny gun worked. The noise was louder than one would expect from such a small thing.

The bullet hit Yamada dead center in the chest. Even so, he jumped at Gruber, screaming wordlessly—

Gruber leaped to the side and Yamada's rush missed.

Yamada stumbled, fell to his knees. Gruber watched as the other man frowned. He tried to speak, but his voice failed him.

Yamada fell onto his side. Gruber heard the death rattle as the Japanese doctor's final breath left his body.

"Sorry, Yamada," Gruber said. "It was never your destiny to prevail. Our German God is stronger than your Japanese one."

Gruber bent, picked up the wooden box. He walked toward the wooden dock. The man at the boat, if he heard the shot, gave no sign. A deal would be struck.

Gruber walked along the planking, the smell of creosote under the clearing sky and warm sun acrid in his nostrils. The man at the end of the dock had his back to Gruber, staring out to sea.

"I will pay you well to take me to the mainland," Gruber said, in French.

The man turned.

The shock of seeing the ruined face so stunned Gruber that he dropped the box. Saw it hit the dock, bounce, and fall into the sea. He turned to run, but it was too late—

The monster's hideous expression was the last thing Edwin Gruber saw in life as it sank its teeth into his neck . . .

### *At the Gate to the Other Realm*

Papa Legba stood drawing upon his pipe, blowing clouds of red smoke, three dogs lying at his feet.

This time when Boukman approached, the dogs all growled at him.

Boukman came to stand in front of Papa Legba.

The old man shook his head. "You have much to answer for, Boukman. Many in the Other Realm would speak to you—some harshly, I expect. Waitin' a long time for the chance."

Boukman nodded. Of course.

"Did you get to build the shelter for the dogs?"

Time ran different for the loa. He could have been here a thousand years compared with the few days that Boukman had lived.

"No, Papa, I am sorry."

The old man nodded. "Well. One more thing you must make good. But the line ahead of me is long. Could be a long time before you come available for us to discuss your repayment."

"I would have built the shelter, had I lived."

Papa Legba blew out a thin stream of ruby-colored smoke. It hung shimmering redly in the sun's hard light, hardly moved by any wind at all. "Maybe. But it doesn't matter now, does it?"

Boukman shook his head. No. It didn't matter, now.

Papa reached for the gate. Opened it. Nodded at Boukman.

Boukman walked through the opening.

Monstrous, grinning things were waiting for him.

Fear enveloped him.

## FORTY

*Port-au-Prince Airport*

“WHY DON’T YOU come with me,” Indy said, even though he knew she wouldn’t. He didn’t have any long-range plans, but who knew where it might go? She was smart, beautiful, and she liked him, he knew that.

Marie put her hand on his chest and smiled up at him. “I cannot.”

“We might make it work.”

“It isn’t about us, Indy. It is about this.” She waved her hand to encompass all of Haiti. “You are a man of the world, you will travel far and wide to do what you must, but I am needed here.”

Yeah. She was right.

“And you would certainly not be happy in Haiti for long.”

He sighed, then nodded. She was right about that, too. Even his notion of settling into teaching was already starting to fade. Someday, maybe. Not yet. He wasn’t that old. “Yeah. I figured that’s what you’d say.”

“Perhaps I can visit you.”

“I’d like that.” But they both knew she never would.

“Before you go, I have something for you.”

“You’ve already given me more than I deserve,” he said, remembering last night at her house.

Her smile grew. “That was a mutual gift. Here.”

She produced a fist-sized silk bundle from her pocket.

He knew what it was. “The pearl? But—”

“It has already given me all that it can. I have beheld the true heart beneath the darkness. It has been drained, there is no power left. Take it and put it in a museum somewhere. Perhaps you can tell a bit of the story—not that anybody in your world will believe it.”

He took the silk package, stuck it into his pocket. “Thank you.”

She shrugged. “It is the least I can do, after all you have done for me.”

They embraced, and he kissed her. Not like a brother does a sister. A farewell kiss, sweet and bitter at the same time. Acknowledging what would never be.

“Go. Your plane will leave without you.”

He released her, held her at arm's length.

He turned and hurried toward the old Ford Tri-Motor, whose engines were already coughing blue smoke and whirring to life, set to take them to Cuba. Mac stood in the doorway, waiting.

On board, Indy moved to one of the vacant seats, which were low wicker chairs screwed to the deck. He looked out the window at Marie. Another road not taken.

The plane taxied from the apron onto the runway. The engines roared louder, and the aircraft sped down the tarmac faster and faster until it was able to leap into the air.

They banked and went back the way they had come, a few hundred feet up, and Indy saw her standing there, waving at him. Maybe he was making a mistake. Forget the war, forget roaming from country to country, chasing history, tilting at windmills. Maybe he should have stayed, to live in the moment.

He looked at her.

Saw someone behind her . . .

Behind him, Mac leaned over the wicker seat back. "Odd, thing, Indy!" He had to yell to be heard over the engines' noise. "I thought I saw someone—"

"—No," Indy said. "You didn't see anything!"

Mac blinked. Then he nodded. "Ah. Right. Nothing." He leaned back in his chair.

Behind Marie, in the shade of an outbuilding, Mac *had* seen someone—someone that Indy hadn't noticed when he'd been on the ground with Marie saying his farewells. But it wasn't some *one*, it was *two* men, and even as the plane sped away, shrinking them to the size of toys, he recognized them easily.

The hair on his neck stirred as he beheld the duo and knew who they were:

Dr. Gruber, the German, and Dr. Yamada, the Japanese officer. They were not watching the plane but staring into space, as still as statues.

Dead men, standing, waiting to be commanded.

Indy's breath caught, as he suddenly remembered what Marie had said to him after that terrible night only two days past at the sisal plantation: What had belonged to Boukman, she'd said, now belonged to her. And when Indy had wondered about where they had gone?

*Not far*, she'd said.

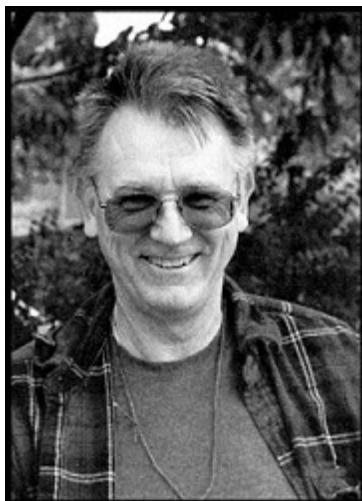
Indy swallowed, his mouth suddenly dry, as he realized just what that meant.

The low clouds obscured his view. It was an image he would carry

forever, that last glimpse of *petite* Marie Arnoux, waving good-bye . . . standing in front of two *zombis*.

Her *zombis*, now.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



**STEVE PERRY** wrote for *Batman: The Animated Series* during its first Emmy Award-winning season, authored the *New York Times* bestsellers *Star Wars: Death Star* (with Michael Reaves) and *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire*, and wrote the bestselling novelization of the blockbuster movie *Men in Black*. Perry has sold dozens of stories to magazines and anthologies, and has published a considerable number of novels, animated teleplays, nonfiction articles, reviews, and essays. He is currently the science fiction, fantasy, and horror book reviewer for *The Oregonian*.